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THE ARTS IN  
AMERICAN LIFE



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# THE ARTS IN AMERICAN LIFE

BY  
FREDERICK P. KEPPEL  
AND  
R. L. DUFFUS

McGRAW-HILL BOOK COMPANY, INC  
NEW YORK AND LONDON  
1933

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## FOREWORD BY THE COMMITTEE

THE ARTS IN AMERICAN LIFE by Frederick P. Keppel and R. L. Duffus is one of a series of monographs published under the direction of the President's Research Committee on Social Trends, embodying scientific information assembled for the use of the Committee in the preparation of its report entitled *Recent Social Trends in the United States*.

The Committee was named by President Herbert Hoover in December, 1929, to survey social changes in this country in order to throw light on the emerging problems which now confront or which may be expected later to confront the people of the United States. The undertaking is unique in our history. For the first time the head of the Nation has called upon a group of social scientists to sponsor and direct a broad scientific study of the factors of change in modern society.

Funds for the researches were granted by the Rockefeller Foundation, an expert staff was recruited from universities and other scientific institutions, and a series of investigations was begun early in 1930 and concluded in 1932. The complete report contains the findings of the President's Research Committee on Social Trends together with twenty-nine chapters prepared by experts in the various fields.

Modern social life is so closely integrated as a whole that no change can occur in any of its phases without affecting other phases in some measure. Social problems arise largely from such unplanned reactions of the rapidly changing phases of social life upon the more stable phases. To give a few examples: changes in industrial technique react upon employment, changes in the character of adult work affect educational needs, changes in international relations affect domestic politics, changes in immigration policy affect the growth of population and the demand for farm products, changes in consumption habits affect the demand for leisure and facilities for enjoying it, changes in demands for social service by governmental agencies affect taxes and public debts, changes in methods of communication tend to standardize the mode of life

## FOREWORD

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in country and city. The effects noted in this list of illustrations in their turn cause other changes, and so on without assignable limits.

The usual practice of concentrating attention upon one social problem at a time often betrays us into overlooking these intricate relations. Even when we find what appears to be a satisfactory solution of a single problem, we are likely to produce new problems by putting that solution into practice. Hence the need of making a comprehensive survey of the many social changes which are proceeding simultaneously, with an eye to their reactions upon one another. That task is attempted in the Committee's report. Of course the list of changes there considered is not exhaustive. Nor can all the subtle interactions among social changes be traced.

To safeguard the conclusions against bias, the researches were restricted to the analysis of objective data. Since the available data do not cover all phases of the many subjects studied, it was often impossible to answer questions of keen interest. But what is set forth has been made as trustworthy as the staff could make it by careful checking with factual records. Discussions which are not limited by the severe requirements of scientific method have their uses, which the Committee rates highly. Yet an investigation initiated by the President in the hope that the findings may be of service in dealing with the national problems of today and tomorrow, should be kept as free as possible from emotional coloring and unverifiable conjectures. Accuracy and reliability are more important in such an undertaking than liveliness or zeal to do good. If men and women of all shades of opinion from extreme conservatism to extreme radicalism can find a common basis of secure knowledge to build upon, the social changes of the future may be brought in larger measure under the control of social intelligence.

The Committee's researches were not confined to preparing a general report laid out with proper regard for balance. Intensive investigations of considerable length were carried out in several directions where the importance of the subjects warranted and adequate data were available. Some investigators were rewarded by especially valuable developments of their programs on a scale which made it impossible to condense the results into a single chapter without serious loss. In these cases separate monographs

## FOREWORD

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are necessary to provide adequate presentation of the evidence and the findings. However, at least a part of the subject matter of each monograph is dealt with in the Committee's general report, which should be read by all who wish to see a rounded picture of social trends.



## PREFATORY NOTE

Custom requires that my name should precede that of my junior colleague on the title page of this book, but without a word of comment on my part this order would create an erroneous impression. My own share in the joint undertaking has consisted almost entirely in the collection and analysis of material. This was done in the first instance in preparation for the chapter on The Arts in Social Life for the report on Recent Social Trends in the United States, which was, so far as I know, the first attempt to study the arts as a whole from the social as contrasted with the aesthetic point of view.

When it developed that the available material was far too rich and varied to be dealt with adequately in a brief chapter, the Committee made arrangement for the preparation and publication of the present monograph. As soon as Mr. Duffus had an opportunity to study for himself the material collected by me, and had added substantially to it, notably in the drama, the dance and the moving picture, we compared notes as to interpretation and conclusions, and found that we were in the closest accord in these matters, both along broad lines and, in surprising degree, as to details. As a result, while the responsibility for the conclusions must be shared by both partners, the credit for presentation should go almost wholly to the junior member of the firm.

F. P. KEPPEL.

NEW YORK, N. Y.  
*January, 1933.*





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# THE ARTS IN AMERICAN LIFE

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

MAN'S attempt to express himself through what have come to be called the arts is probably as old as the recognizably human race. It may be regarded as part of that immemorial effort to produce order in a seemingly chaotic universe to which science, religion and organized government may also be traced. In all four of these fields man appears as a creator, producing new patterns or bringing to light patterns already existing.

Science, religion and government are social in their nature, though the first two, at least, leave abundant scope for individual self-expression. The arts rest more solidly on the experience of the individual as creator and observer. They begin and end as a personal pattern, giving form to a highly personal emotion and satisfying a highly personal need.

But we must also think of them as being vitally influenced by the social pattern, as involving in most instances some form of social cooperation, and as running like golden threads through the social fabric. The social nature of the arts would not have been challenged until comparatively modern times. The conception of the artist as a man who creates only to please himself, with no thought of communicating with his fellows, or of influencing them, is recent. It may be illustrated by imagining an artist who is shipwrecked on a desert island which he knows will never again be visited by human beings, yet who sets to work with undiminished zeal to produce paintings with the canvas and colors he has contrived to bring ashore. In theory, at least, there are such artists. In practice nearly all artists take advantage of every opportunity to show their work.

The theory of the completely individualistic artist is mentioned only because if such artists exist they do not come within

the scope of the present discussion. It is here proposed to deal with art as a social phenomenon in a given country over a limited period of time. Under the restrictions of this formula the artist who produces for himself alone, with no thought of his fellows, would be of importance for two reasons only: first, negatively, because he would express a revolt against society, just as would a man who retired to a mountain top to live by himself; second, positively, because his work might affect his fellows, even though he did not intend that it should. But it is doubtful that any artist, whatever his theories, can completely divorce himself from the time and the environment in which he lives. The theory of individualism is in itself a reaction to an environment. In treating art as social, therefore, no large or significant field is eliminated.

The present discussion will concern itself with the arts in the United States, largely but not exclusively between 1920 and 1930, relying as much as possible upon quantitative data. This must not be taken as an indifference to qualitative elements, nor as a confusion of quantity with quality. But any attempt to define and classify the qualitative elements in the arts in America would vitiate any sociological value this presentation of facts might have. Many of us may consider the American architecture of 1933 an advance over that of 1923 or 1883. Sociologically speaking, all that can be said is that Americans have changed their building habits.

The same principle may be applied in the whole field of activity covered by the so-called "fine" and "applied" arts. That there have been changes in taste both among artists and among the general public can be established. That these changes are for better or for worse cannot be scientifically proven. Using the sociological approach we can treat these changes in two ways. We can identify and describe trends in the arts and try to relate them with trends in other fields of human activity and with alterations in the character of the population. There are clearly technological as well as aesthetic reasons for the replacement of the horse and buggy by the automobile and for the development of the first automobiles, with their buggy-like characteristics, into the streamlined motor car of to-day. The streamlined car of 1933 seems to most of us better looking than its predecessor of 1923 or 1913. The fact that it *seems* so is of sociological importance. We have no

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means of proving that it actually *is* so. To take another example, it can possibly be established that the feminine costumes of 1933 are more conducive to the health of the wearers than were those of 1883. Their relative simplicity and their greater harmony with the outlines of the human body also make them more satisfactory to the modern eye. But this is merely to note that harmony and simplicity are now in fashion. We cannot prove that they always will be or that they always ought to be.

But what an age thinks of itself and of its standards is of sociological significance. We can, therefore, picture trends as they objectively are, and we can present authoritative opinions as to what those trends indicate. We can see what our generation is doing and what it thinks it is doing. Aesthetic theory is important in its effects upon human conduct, even though we cannot assign absolute values to it. Similarly, we could not assign absolute values to theories of government or of international policy, though it is evident that one set of theories may produce a peace loving democracy, whereas another may lead to a warlike absolutism.

Having laid down these principles we must frankly face a certain difficulty in applying them to the arts. The quantitative data in this field are admittedly incomplete and unsatisfactory. It is not easy to draw a hard and fast line between activities that come under the head of the arts and those that do not. Hunting and fishing, for examples, are arts only by courtesy of a figure of speech. Yet an appreciation of outdoor life and of natural scenery undoubtedly has an aesthetic significance. The motion pictures must be included in any discussion of the arts in America. But does an increasing attendance at the motion pictures, which we can fairly well measure, indicate an increasing popular interest in the arts? We may say that it does indicate a very general exposure to certain aesthetic conventions, good or bad, which exist in the motion picture industry. The motion picture represents a "social change" with an aesthetic implication. Beyond that statement we can hardly go.

In many other fields we can make more or less accurate measurements. We know that registrations in art schools and art courses have been increasing; that there has been a growth in the number of those actually earning a living by practicing the arts; that manufacturers and merchants are making fuller use of artists

and designers; that architects and landscape gardeners are playing a more important role than they used to; that appropriations for parks and for city planning have increased; and that attendance at art museums has grown. It is safe to say that a larger percentage of our population is consciously interested in the arts than was the case a decade or more ago. Whether this interest is to good purpose is a question we are not called upon to decide. It may have aesthetic meaning. It certainly has sociological meaning.

Having established this trend we may take cognizance of certain factors behind it, though it is not within the scope of the present volume to go into them in any detail. One of these factors is increasing leisure. In a time of depression and unemployment this phrase may have an ironic significance. Yet the working day has been greatly shortened during the history of the Republic, and it is generally believed that this tendency will continue, despite fluctuations in economic conditions. The five-and-a-half-day week is common in many industries and the six-hour day has its advocates. It is by no means certain that more leisure means more art or more interest in the arts. In times gone by periods of great artistic energy have often been periods of little leisure. Artistic expression, prior to the machine age, was frequently possible within the limitations of daily work. It is less possible, for great numbers of our citizens, now. If these workers are to participate in aesthetic activities and enjoyments they must do so outside of working hours. Leisure does not ensure that they will do so but it creates a situation in which they may do so.

An increase in real wages may have the same effect. In proportion as the average man has more choice as to what he buys there is more room for the aesthetic element to enter in. It is undeniable that the appeal of the aesthetic is being more and more considered in the articles which are offered to him for sale. In his house, his furniture, his clothing, his radio set, his motor car a determined effort is being made to interest him not only in serviceability but in looks. In other words, aesthetic standards, good or bad, are being forced upon him. The larger his income the wider this field of aesthetic selection will be. Advertising, growing more and more conscious not only of the looks of the things it has to sell but of its own looks, is practically forcing aesthetics upon him. The theory may be offered, therefore, subject to evidence to be pre-

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sented in the chapters that follow, that the long time curves of leisure, income and interest in the arts, in present day United States, follow parallel trends.

Still another factor may be mentioned as illustrative of changes in the nature of the population itself. There has been an absolute increase in the number of individuals in the country above the age of forty-five. In 1900 this group composed 17.7 percent of the population; in 1920, 20.8 percent; in 1930 about 23 percent. This increase in the number of the middle aged and elderly may have little bearing upon the creation of art but it undoubtedly has a bearing upon the size of the artist's public. The older groups are more likely than the younger to have not only the leisure but the means for a deliberate cultivation of the aesthetic. It is probable, also, that shifts in the racial composition of the population affect the kind and quality of the arts and of artistic appreciation. Likewise, the drop in immigration which has tended to render us racially more stable since the beginning of the World War must be taken into consideration. But though we can measure this factor statistically, and must be aware of it in any discussion of the present subject, it is not possible to make a quantitative analysis of its significance.

The psychological changes of the past decade are equally important and even more difficult to measure. It may be stated as a self-evident fact that ideas in all fields, including that of the arts, have altered rapidly and radically. It is also self-evident that no important alteration in men's ways of thinking and acting can be without its effect on the arts. The homes, the workshops, the facilities for travel and recreation which we enjoy in 1933 are noticeably different from those of 1920. The scale of living has altered. We are accustomed to speeds and magnitudes far greater than those of even a few years ago. Airplanes, motor cars and set-back skyscrapers have made us familiar with new forms. In material things our patterns of life are plastic, and this plasticity is reflected in the immaterial. The doubting, innovating types of mind reveal themselves in all the arts. Every age has its modernists, but ours have been unusually aggressive. The changes they have brought about have not, it is true, been uniform. For instance, the revolt against literal representation in painting is probably not as violent as it was fifteen years ago. On the other hand,



modernism in architecture has produced results which, though they are accepted today, would have been startling indeed to the man of prevailing tastes and standards during the World War years.

With this very rapid psychological shift has gone a growing acquaintance with psychology itself, based upon more intensive studies of human behavior, by several diverse schools of investigators, than had previously been made. Mental hygiene has become almost as definite a conception as bodily hygiene. The necessity of recreational and creative play to a normal human life has been recognized, and the arts have been assigned a place in such play. Thus we have to deal not only with spontaneous trends toward the arts but with a conscious direction of effort to further the arts by leaders in education and recreation. This is but one phase of the movement toward a planned society, but it is an important one.

A few words should be said as to the method of the present inquiry. As in the briefer chapter<sup>1</sup> on the same subject an effort has been made to present as much tangible evidence as possible. But evidence of this sort, particularly of a statistical nature, is by no means abundant, and in many instances where it has been gathered for recent years no comparable data exist for an earlier period. Yet the very fact that data in this field are being gathered and compiled by a number of agencies at the present time, whereas they were not so gathered and compiled a few years ago, is in itself an indication of increasing interest in the arts.

The proportions of the subject were surveyed, however, first by an examination of a voluminous collection of printed material; second, by personal contacts with men and women working in nearly every field of the arts; third, by submitting tentative results to authorities willing and able to give disinterested criticisms.

Hardly any phase of human activity is without its aesthetic side, and to describe the role of aesthetics in America or in any other country would be to describe a civilization. It was therefore necessary to limit the subject by excluding most activities in which the aesthetic element is not generally recognized and by laying most emphasis upon those which had the widest social implica-

<sup>1</sup> See Chapter XIX, Report of President's Committee on *Recent Social Trends in the United States*.

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tions. As a matter of course, painting and sculpture, music, literature, the stage drama and the motion picture, pageantry and the dance, architecture, landscape design and gardening, and the industrial arts and crafts were included. The treatment of these topics does not necessarily follow the order of importance which they might occupy in a history of American art, since the social significance of a given fact is by no means the same as its aesthetic significance.

Thus, the easel painting occupies a dominant position in the development of art since the Renaissance, yet it must now be assigned a second place in a discussion of the present day sociological implications of art. With the physical shrinkage of the homes even of the well to do there is less room for it on domestic walls, and it is more and more retiring to the museums; the financial depression has accentuated this tendency.<sup>2</sup> Mural painting, on the other hand, is gaining in importance, not because it is or is not a superior form of art, but because it has a place in modern schemes of architecture and decoration. Sculpture, too, because of its architectural uses, is more frequently found outside of museums and art galleries than is easel painting. Literature in some form the average man can hardly avoid. The newspapers, magazines, novels, short stories and popular tunes of today, whatever their aesthetic merit, are as significant in any sociological study as were the ballads and folk songs of yesterday. The drama and the motion picture have their meanings, too—the latter, because of its vast audience, cannot be overlooked in any cultural survey.

The subject has been approached with as few preconceptions as possible. The data presented seem to show an increased popular interest in the arts. The apparent significance of that interest will be discussed in later chapters.

<sup>2</sup>“Today, for all practical purposes, the private buyer has disappeared. There remain only the museums, of which there are many throughout the country.” Edgar J. Bernheimer, quoted in *The Art Digest*, June 1, 1932, p. 2.

## CHAPTER II

### THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

THE arts as we have them today in the United States are obviously a product of long evolution, largely in other countries, to some degree in our own. Before considering their present day role in America it will be well to recall some of the salient facts in their history here and some of the peculiarly American conditions which have affected them. Since art is commonly a product of leisure or tradition or of a combination of the two we must not expect to find it highly developed in a pioneer country. The pioneer has broken wholly or partially with old traditions, though he may be making new ones. The struggle for existence absorbs his energies. A kind of integrity which is closely akin to the processes of the arts may, indeed, arise out of the struggle. The hunter needs a cool precision, an economy of effort, a delicacy of the senses in which an artist might rejoice. The frontier carpenter hews to the line of his necessities, obeying unwittingly Louis Sullivan's law that "form follows function." The spinning, weaving and sewing housewife has no use for shoddy fabrics and her materials compel simplicity of design.

But the pioneer is rarely aesthetic in a conscious way. He is close to nature, which is a fundamental source of artistic inspiration; but nature, to him, is an enemy to be conquered or a wild thing to be tamed. He must deface the landscape in order to subdue it. His first gropings toward the aesthetic, therefore, reveal themselves in domestic handicraft and, as in early New England, in his churches and town halls. As the frontiersman left the seaboard, where contact with European civilization was comparatively easy, and ventured further and further inland, he often lived a life as primitive as a savage's, but without the tribal culture which even the savage had. The fact does not call for condemnation. The frontiersman was a normal human being who adjusted himself as well as he could to his environment. He was, in a sense, barbaric. He was not a Philistine. Let us trace briefly

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the processes by which he or his descendents passed out of this primitive stage and became aesthetically more sensitive. To do this it is necessary to bear in mind the broad facts of early colonial history.

We have to distinguish among several kinds of colonies, each subjected to hard frontier conditions, yet differing among themselves in the cultural heritage their inhabitants had brought with them. The English Puritans and Pilgrims in Massachusetts; the English liberals in Rhode Island; the Dutch in what is now New York; the Swedes on the Delaware; the English Quakers, the Scotch-Irish and the Germans in Pennsylvania; the English Catholics in Maryland; the Church of England settlers in Virginia and the Carolinas; the poorer strata of Englishmen who pushed their way into inland Georgia; the Spanish in Florida; the French and Spanish in Louisiana—all these differed among themselves in outlook upon life, and most of them left tangible and intangible traces which are recognizable even under the much advertised “standardization” of the present day. In parts of Pennsylvania “Dutch” is still commonly spoken; in parts of Louisiana the “Cajan” French of Evangeline’s people is more common than English; and as one goes south along the coast from the northern boundary of Maine the local dialects vary from state to state. In New England the nasal twang of the Vermonter is readily distinguishable from the open vowels of Boston, and the Bostonians do not talk like the Cape Codders; in the South the Virginia drawl is of a different species from that of South Carolina or the soft speech of upstate Louisiana. These speech distinctions reflect an original cultural differentiation which showed itself in some of the earlier forms of art and which has not been entirely lost.

The overwhelming influence of New England has been proclaimed, probably with good reason, in our histories. The New England culture was long dominant over a large area. Unlike that of the South, it was not shattered by civil war. The New Englanders were colonists and navigators. In the early whaling and trading days they made the Pacific so thoroughly their own back yard that “Boston” was a more familiar expression in those waters than “United States.”<sup>3</sup> On land they pushed westward into western

<sup>3</sup> See Richard Henry Dana, Jr., *Two Years before the Mast*, chap. XIX. See also Sydney Greenbie and Marjorie Greenbie, *Gold of Ophir*, New York, 1925, chaps. IV–XI; and Samuel Eliot Morison, *The Maritime History of Massachusetts, 1783–1860*, Boston, 1921.

New York, Ohio, the lake states, the Mississippi Valley and eventually Oregon and California. There has probably been a tendency to exaggerate the role of New England in the making of America and to underestimate the part played by the other cultures mentioned in the preceding paragraph. Nevertheless New England has to be put first in any outline of our cultural history.

The early New Englanders were in revolt not only against the Church of England but against what might be called the more sensuous aspects of English culture. As Suzanne La Follette has put it in her excellent history of *Art in America*:<sup>4</sup>

The Colonial Puritans were blood brothers of those image breakers who desecrated the churches of England under Cromwell with such thoroughness that nothing is rarer in England today than an example of medieval religious art. There were no images to destroy in America, but the Puritans could at least see to it that none was fashioned in those sections where their influence was paramount. They went farther, indeed. Any attempt to please the eye they were inclined to regard as a diversion from the one purpose which they considered valid, the attempt to please God . . . So long as this spirit dominates a community art in any of its aspects will find little to nourish it.

Like all generalizations, this one needs qualification. The first generations of New England pioneers did not nourish much that they themselves would have defined as art. What we now perceive to have been art in their lives was, as Miss La Follette says, "almost exclusively utilitarian." But to describe arts as utilitarian is not to rule them out of court. Particularly is it not to put them out of the scheme of the present discussion. If a community cares about the appearance of its houses and its furniture it is beginning to care about art. Early colonial houses were, to quote Miss La Follette again, "dynamic; for they were built not in terms of a dead formula, but in terms of the life that was to be lived in them." We have no means of knowing to what extent they seemed "dynamic" to their owners and builders. They must have satisfied them, for imitation led to the creation of a humble but recognizable American style, which lasted until American builders began to copy the imported Georgian mode. But this copying, whether intrinsically good or bad, showed at least a conscious interest in the looks of things.

<sup>4</sup> New York, 1929.

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The crafts serving the domestic interior were brought from the home country and modified to meet American conditions. Puritan housewives manifestly took pride in their weaving and embroidery. Ornament, in those phases of life in which it was permitted, must have been important to them, for they spent hours of labor in an already overburdened working day to achieve it. Carved furniture came into use as soon as a little leisure made it possible. Fine glassware was being produced as early as 1750. Metalware was first imported, then produced in the Colonies themselves. By revolutionary times America had famous silversmiths; Paul Revere undoubtedly expected to be remembered for his achievements in that art rather than for his famous midnight ride.

As New England and the South produced their solidly entrenched aristocracies the demand for the refinements of life increased. There was a reaction against the primitive forms which had been made necessary by the conditions of existence in a new country. Americans looked abroad and saw the aesthetic fashion turning to Greek and Roman models. Thomas Jefferson, a slave owner who believed in democracy, saw nothing incongruous in placing in an American setting his own classic designs for the University of Virginia. But it is significant that Jefferson could be at once a politician, a statesman and a pretty good amateur architect. If Jeffersonian democracy, in which the people theoretically ruled but in which they were expected to let themselves be guided by a selected group of enlightened and discriminating superiors, had prevailed, America might have witnessed a very effective combination of taste and governing ability. But the rise of Jacksonian democracy destroyed the prestige of Jefferson's class; and statesmen ceased to design buildings.

Thus what we now look back to as "Colonial" art and architecture was not characteristic of the whole or even a large part of the Colonial period. It left its mark all along the Eastern seaboard, in private homes, churches and public buildings. Its pillars and porticos carry us down as far as the Civil War, and even farther. It seems now to express the quietness and leisureliness we love to attribute to bygone days. It was a sincere effort to get away from the inevitable rawness of a new country. It was an honest expression of the early republican dream. But when the common man began to come into power he proceeded, with a genuine though

untutored interest in appearances, to smash the classic styles. This was not entirely America's doing. The same phenomenon occurred in other countries. In America, where the tradition-bearing classes were weaker, smaller in number and more continuously invaded from below than was the case elsewhere, the effects were more sweeping. It may have been a healthier symptom that the American people should take an interest in styles, even to the point of vulgarizing them, than that they should have accepted them ready made from those who professed to know about such things.

However, while the classical styles were dying, something else, commonly known as the Industrial Revolution, was running its course. The common man no longer produced the things he used, as he had done to such a large extent in Colonial times and even in the early days of the Republic, and as he—and his wife—still do in a few isolated regions in the United States.<sup>5</sup> Machines produced for him. It was no longer necessary to be limited to simple things, because the machines could easily and cheaply be made to perform all manner of tricks. Just as some authors "write down" to the supposed limitations of their audience, so the makers of houses, furniture, clothing and "objects of art" may be said to have "designed down" to the same theoretical level. This is not the place in which to pass a critical judgment on the results. There is a practical unanimity of opinion among our aesthetic historians that they were bad. But if this is true it is also true that the standards in question did not arise from the people but were imposed upon them. This is not to be interpreted as a defense of popular taste at that or any other time, but is merely to say that it is not a fixed thing. It varies from age to age, it is influenced by psychological laws and it is teachable. Unless this assumption can be made it is useless to discuss the sociology of the arts.

In architecture, which may be taken as a convenient barometer of popular taste, the nineteenth century was a time of confusion of styles, though no more so in the United States than elsewhere. The classic gave way to the Gothic, the Gothic to a war of styles in which the battle cries were sounded in almost every architectural dialect known to man. Modernists find the Mansard roof and the scroll-saw ornamentation of the 1870's hardest to forgive. Orna-

<sup>5</sup> See William F. Ogburn, "The Family," chap. XIII, p. 661, Report of the President's Committee on Recent Social Trends in the United States.

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mentation also ran riot in buildings for public and commercial purposes. Domestic interiors were cluttered with bric-a-brac. To most moderns the buildings of two generations ago, inside and outside, seem stuffy and incoherent.

But a succession of notable architects was about to appear. Henry Hobson Richardson, born in Louisiana in 1838, laid the foundations of a typically American manner of building. Richardson studied in Paris, returning to the United States at the close of the Civil War. As Lewis Mumford says in *The Brown Decades*, he had "escaped from the dominant styles of his period, those which a later critic facetiously referred to as the Victorian Cathartic, the Tubercular or Queen Anne Style and the Cataleptic Style." He worked first in Gothic, then in the heavy, dignified Romanesque with which his name is most closely associated. In the few years prior to his death in 1886 he was obviously searching for a new style, or rather a new method. He might have come nearer to finding it if he had lived long enough to see steel frame construction in general use.

Meanwhile, three years before the Centennial Exposition of 1876 in Philadelphia, two young Chicago architects, John Wellborn Root and Daniel Burnham, had gone into partnership. Their Monadnock building, fifteen stories high, was a striking solution of the problem of the commercial structure, done in masonry and designed for elevators. The steel frame building, in which the metal actually provides the sustaining strength, and the brick, stone or cement are but a sheath, came a little later. The prophet of steel frames was Louis Sullivan, also a Chicagoan by adoption. Born in Boston in 1856, Sullivan reached Chicago in the late 1870's, and at thirty was commissioned to do the Auditorium building, a striking example of plain, strong and simple construction. His Transportation building at the World's Fair in 1893 has often been commented upon for seeming to be precisely what it was—a study in plaster intended to express outwardly and inwardly the purpose for which it was erected. It was Sullivan who declared that the skyscraper "must be every inch a proud and soaring thing," and it was Sullivan also who laid down the principle that "form follows function"—in other words, that a building should be designed from the inside out rather than from the outside in. There was clearly foreshadowed in his buildings and in his utter-



ances a new and distinctly American architectural style. Yet in his later years he was allowed to fall into relative obscurity and his influence was not as powerful as it might have been on the rising generation of skyscraper builders.

Another architect who in late years has seemed to be coming back into favor after a period of comparative neglect is Frank Lloyd Wright. Wright was a pupil of Louis Sullivan, and according to Sheldon Cheney "has done more than any other individual to demonstrate that new methods and new philosophies of building have already displaced the old."<sup>6</sup> Wright's early country or small-town residences, with their flat lines hugging the earth, their abundant provisions for air and sunlight, and their spacious, open interiors, are easily recognizable. His contribution, however, is not a style but a habit of solving each new building problem in terms of use, site and material. In this way he links the most modern architecture with the earlier that the Atlantic seaboard or the Spanish colonies of the Southwest knew. His designs range from something very like a shack intended to give "the feel of the desert country" to a plan for a skyscraper with walls of glass and sheet copper. Some of his later structures are put together with cast and decorated concrete slabs. American architecture, as will be seen in a later chapter, is still in the making. The skyscraper period may or may not be near its close. In domestic architecture the war of styles is not likely to end until, to adapt Mr. Wright's phrasing, "styles" give way to "style."

The other arts in America have been until recent years more derivative and their history reveals less that is distinctively American. Fascinating as the record is, with its early "limners" giving place to portrait painters trained in European schools and studios, its historical painters of the revolutionary era, its landscape painters who first discovered the pictorial possibilities of the American scene early in the nineteenth century, its figurehead carvers who developed into sculptors, and its more recent schools of Impressionists, post-Impressionists and "Modernists," the story has been told elsewhere<sup>7</sup> and need not be re-told here.

<sup>6</sup> *The New World Architecture*, New York, 1930.

<sup>7</sup> See Suzanne La Follette, *Art in America*, New York, 1929; Lewis Mumford, *The Brown Decades*, New York, 1931; and Vol. 12, *The Pageant of America*, "The American Spirit in Art," by Frank Jewett Mather, Jr., Charles Rufus Morey and William James Henderson, New Haven, 1927.

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It should be noted, however, that the evolution of the United States in all the arts has shown a conflict between foreign influences and native impulses, and that the present century has witnessed a renewed effort toward an American style. The "cultural lag" in America, to borrow a phrase of Professor Ogburn's, may be measured by the fact that the "Modernist" movement, which had been going on vigorously in Europe since at least the beginning of the century, did not reach America until 1913. The fact that Americans were slow in taking cognizance of it may also be held to mean, however, if one likes to interpret it in that way, that American artists were working out a style of their own; and it may be that "Modernism," with its strong foreign influence, interrupted that development. To say this, is not, of course, to imply that art should or should not be nationalistic; it is a thought, nevertheless, that must arise if one is considering the subject from the national point of view. At any rate, it seems certain that in painting, as in sculpture and music, America is still in a transitional stage, characterized by much uncertainty, much experimentation and a strong foreign influence. The purely native note can be distinguished only in architecture, and not always in that. In general, as will appear from evidence to be presented in succeeding chapters, it is more distinguishable in the "applied" than in the "fine" arts.

### CHAPTER III

## THE ECONOMIC SETTING

THE artist may work without desire for money or even for fame, though some creative geniuses have displayed keen interest in both these types of mundane reward and much ingenuity in gaining them. Giotto received the tidy sum of \$22,000 for his mosaic of Christ walking on the water, in the old Church of St. Peter at Rome; Michael Angelo, son of a Florentine family so reduced in circumstances that he had to send home a considerable part of his first earnings, died leaving \$100,000 in cash; Titian, as Thomas Craven tells us, "drove sharp bargains, wisely invested his savings, kept track of every penny"; Rubens knew his own earning power so well that he priced his pictures on the basis of time spent at \$100 a day; Turner, the son of a barber, left a fortune of nearly three-quarters of a million dollars. Other great artists and many lesser ones have paid less attention to money. But all art has to be paid for, in money or in effort or both, and we can in some degree measure a community's interest in pictures, or statues, or fine buildings or exquisite furnishings by what it is willing to pay for them. Let us apply this test, as far as we can, to contemporary America. At the end of a century and a half of national existence and cultural change what part does the aesthetic play in our national economy?

The question cannot be answered categorically, because we cannot disentangle the aesthetic element when it is scrambled with other elements. Design plays an important part in many industries, in advertising and in retail selling. But though a well designed motor car may be more satisfactory to the eye than many a painting which is passed through the customs as fine art the fact that many qualities other than the motor car's looks enter into its value makes it impossible to estimate the appeal to the eye in terms of dollars and cents. The same rule holds true for almost every article of common use. In making an economic estimate of the arts, therefore, we are in the main compelled to limit our-

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selves to the so-called fine arts, largely in the fields of sculpture and painting. Expenditures in these fields may perhaps be taken as indicative of the national attitude toward the arts in general.

However, even when we stick to rigid classifications, the resulting figures are worth attention. Two independent recent estimates, one made by a Harvard student and one by an insurance expert, place the total value of works of fine art<sup>8</sup> in the United States at about two billion dollars. This is somewhat less than half of the value of all motor vehicles in the country in 1932 and about one-third of the value of all livestock. It is considerably more than one-half of one percent of our total national wealth, according to the latest available estimates. During the three years ending with 1929 the United States imported objects of art amounting to a total value of about \$200,000,000, or about one-sixty-third of our total imports during that period. Our art imports during those years were considerably in excess of our imports of raw tobacco, slightly less than our imports of cotton manufactures, more than two-thirds of our imports of fruits and nuts, more than two-thirds of our imports of wood pulp and nearly two-thirds of our imports of copper ore and manufactures. So, while fine art is not a principal import, it is an important one.

Imports of art goods into the United States showed a slight downward tendency between 1910-1914 and 1921-1925, a sharp rise between 1925 and 1929 and a marked decline in 1930. Table 1, showing imports of art goods, is a condensation of a Department of Commerce table.

These classifications do not lend themselves to minute analysis. They do show, however, an overwhelming preference for the classics, with modern works, though tending to assume a more important place, still a poor second. They indicate that the United States, between 1921 and 1929, was increasingly significant as a market for foreign works of art; it is possible that it has retained its relative standing in that respect, though the money value of its art imports has dropped since deflation set in.

<sup>8</sup> The phrase, "works of art," as here used, includes paintings, drawings, etchings, etc. and statuary. It does not, of course, include architectural products or commercial art products. "Art goods," as classified by the Bureau of Foreign and Domestic Commerce, include; "the production of American artists; original paintings, statuary, etc.; statuary, regalia, etc., for religious, or educational purposes; works of art 100 years old; works of art for exhibition, presentation to public institutions, etc.; all other art works."

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If statistics gathered by the American Art Dealers' Association for the year of 1929 are correctly interpreted the gross sales of imported works of art in the United States in that year were more than three times the stated value of our importations of art goods. They

TABLE 1.—IMPORTS OF ART GOODS INTO THE UNITED STATES<sup>a</sup>

	1910-1914 (average)	1921-1925 (average)	1929	1930
All art goods.....	\$34,045,000	\$31,222,000	\$82,106,000	\$65,159,000
The production of American artists.....	719,000	218,000	342,000	198,000
Original paintings, statuary, etc.....		6,787,000	19,198,000	14,151,000
Statuary, regalia, etc., for religious or educational purposes.....	348,000	838,000	1,472,000	1,317,000
Works of art 100 years old.....	31,456,000	22,324,000	58,839,000	46,773,000
Works of art for exhibition, presentation to public institutions, etc.....	1,400,000	709,000	1,519,000	1,898,000
All other art works.....	1,338,000	347,000	754,000	822,000

<sup>a</sup> U. S. Bureau of Foreign and Domestic Commerce, *Statistical Abstract of the United States, 1931*, Table No. 549, p. 609. The figures are given in actual dollars. In terms of 1913 dollars, as determined by the cost of living index, the average for all art goods imported in 1910-1914 would be approximately \$38,534,000, for 1930 \$40,547,000 and for intervening years in proportion. In 1913 dollars the average annual value of art imports per capita was about \$2.75, in 1930 a little over \$3.

amounted, the Association estimated, to about \$250,000,000. The difference in the total values may be due to a marking up of the sales prices after arrival in this country. Sales of paintings done by Americans were not separately calculated in 1929 but in 1930 they were placed at about \$20,000,000. In the latter year it was said that modern American paintings other than portraits had a market value ranging from \$75 to \$1,500 for a single painting, and that modern American sculptures brought from \$150 to \$5,000 apiece. Dealers reported that though the depression had removed many large buyers from the market some progress had been made with the sale of low priced or medium priced paintings to a younger class of collectors on the installment plan. Efforts to market the work of native American artists have achieved some success; the Grand Central Art Gallery of New York City announced in July, 1931, that it had sold \$3,500,000 worth of American paintings since 1923.

A factor of primary importance in any economic picture of the arts is the number of persons to whom they give professional employment. Table 2, taken from the federal census, shows the numbers of actors; architects; artists, sculptors and teachers of

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art; authors; designers; musicians and teachers of music; and architects', designers' and draftsmen's apprentices for the census years, 1910, 1920 and 1930.

TABLE 2.—NUMBER OF MALES AND FEMALES ENGAGED IN OCCUPATIONS CONNECTED WITH THE ARTS, 1910, 1920 AND 1930\*

Artists	1910			1920			1930		
	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female
Actors.....	28,297	16,305	11,992	28,361	15,124	13,237	37,993	18,703	19,290
Architects.....	16,613	16,311	302	18,185	18,048	137	22,000	21,621	379
Artists, sculptors and teachers of art.....	34,104	18,675	15,429	35,402	20,785	14,617	57,265	35,621	21,644
Authors.....	4,368	2,310	2,058	6,668	3,662	3,006	12,449	7,002	5,447
Designers.....	11,788	9,211	2,557	15,410	9,758	5,652	20,508	12,780	7,728
Musicians and teachers of music.....	139,310	54,832	84,478	130,265	57,587	72,678	165,128	85,517	79,611
Architects', designers' and draftsmen's apprentices...	1,153	1,110	43	3,777	3,479	298	2,656	2,436	220

\* U. S. Bureau of the Census, *Occupation Statistics for the United States*, "Persons 10 years old and over gainfully employed," 1932, Table 4.

Certain precautions need to be taken in interpreting this table. The increase in the number of architects might be due in part to a change of designation. The same man might call himself a builder or contractor in 1910 or 1920 and an architect in 1930, just as the real estate man and undertaker of 1910 have become the realtor and mortician of 1933. "Author" and "designer" possess a similar possible ambiguity. The quality of product behind each of these designations is, of course, unknown. Doubtless, however, the table is significant both in its indication of increased activity in the arts and in its suggestion that the arts are acquiring a prestige which induces individuals to classify themselves as pursuing them.

A comparison of the changes in the classifications given with the general increase in population gives ratios which tell more than the obvious trends in numbers. In Table 3 the increases in the general population and in six classifications from Table 2 are given.

Some interesting facts appear in this table. Between 1920 and 1930 every occupation listed increased in number of practitioners more rapidly than did general population. Between 1910

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and 1930 two occupations—architects and musicians—lost ground, relatively, and one occupation—acting—merely held its own. Authorship gained more, relatively, than any other occupation

TABLE 3.—PERCENT INCREASES IN THE NUMBER OF PERSONS EMPLOYED IN OCCUPATIONS CONNECTED WITH THE ARTS COMPARED WITH THE PERCENT INCREASE OF THE GENERAL POPULATION, 1920-1930 AND 1910-1930<sup>a</sup>

	Percent increase 1920-1930, U. S.	Percent increase 1910-1930		Percent increase 1920-1930, U. S.	Percent increase 1910-1930
General population.....	16	34	Authors.....	87	185
Architects.....	21	32	Designers.....	33	74
Artists, sculptors and teachers of art.....	62	68	Actors.....	34	34
Musicians and teachers of music.....	27	19			

<sup>a</sup> Compiled from U. S. Bureau of the Census, *Census of Occupations*, 1930.

in the list, with design second, and art (by which painting seems here to be implied) and sculpture third. Of special interest is the fact that music, which lost most, relatively, lost ground more rapidly during the first decade, prior to the popularization of the radio and the talking motion picture, than during the second

TABLE 4.—PRODUCTION OF STATUARY AND ART GOODS IN THE UNITED STATES, FOR STATED YEARS, WITH NUMBER OF ESTABLISHMENTS<sup>a</sup>

Year	Number of establishments	Value of products
1914.....	190	\$ 3,910,000
1925.....	137	9,330,000
1927.....	136	10,187,000
1929.....	171	10,042,000

<sup>a</sup> Condensed from *The Statistical Abstract of the United States*, 1931, Table 814, p. 831.

decade. This is contrary to what one would suppose to be the result of these inventions, and it is reasonable to expect that the decade which we have now entered will show a relative and perhaps an absolute drop in the number of those who earn their livings by producing or teaching music.

The federal statistics of art manufactures include only a part of the artistic productions of the country, and perhaps, since they deal with establishments rather than individuals, not the

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most important part. Nevertheless, they are pertinent. They yield the figures shown in Table 4, for "statuary and art goods, factory product." Apparently the art "industry," like other industries, began to feel the pinch of depression in 1929. More interesting is its slow increase, of a little more than \$450,000 a year, between 1914 and 1927. Making allowances for the offsetting factors of increasing population and a depreciating dollar during that period, this growth cannot be called spectacular.

For "artists' materials" the *Census of Manufactures* gives the following figures:

TABLE 5.—PRODUCTION OF ARTISTS' MATERIALS IN THE UNITED STATES, FOR STATED YEARS, WITH NUMBER OF ESTABLISHMENTS\*

Year	Number of establishments	Value of products
1914.....	44	\$3,238,000
1925.....	62	8,321,000
1927.....	61	8,205,000
1929.....	68	9,460,000

\* From *The Statistical Abstract of the United States*, 1931, Table 814, p. 838.

Here there is not only the picture of a slow increase, which becomes slower still when allowances are made for rising prices and increased population, but of an actual falling off during the 1925-1927 period. The sudden recovery between 1927 and 1929 is striking but there is reason to doubt that the higher level has been maintained. So many unmeasurable factors enter into the situation, however, that it would be a mistake to give much weight to such figures. There is little connection between the quantity of an artist's raw materials and even the economic value of his output. A canvas containing a hundred square feet covered with paint may be of less value financially as well as aesthetically than one containing only two square feet.

The publication of books about the arts and of art magazines gives us another index. The figures presented in Table 6 are from an unpublished master's thesis by Downing Palmer O'Hara, submitted at the University of Illinois in 1928, and made available through the courtesy of the author and of Dr. P. L. Windsor of the



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faculty of that institution.<sup>9</sup> The percentages given have been calculated by the present authors, the last two being taken from a later table<sup>10</sup> in which domestic and imported titles are not segregated.

TABLE 6.—PROPORTION OF FINE ARTS TITLES TO ALL TITLES OF BOOKS PUBLISHED IN THE UNITED STATES, DURING STATED YEARS<sup>a</sup>

Year	All titles	Fine arts (domestic)	Fine arts (imported)	Percentage of total fine arts titles to all titles
1890.....	4,559			
1896.....	5,703	177	76	4.4
1900.....	6,356	167	54	3.4
1904.....	8,291	253	94	4.1
1908.....	9,254	241	106	3.7
1912.....	10,903	243	105	3.1
1916.....	10,445	238	45	2.7
1920.....	8,422	130	39	2.0
1922.....	8,639	138	37	2.0
1924.....	9,012	189	64	2.7
1926.....	9,925	225	76	3.0
1927.....	10,153	220	73	2.8
1930.....	10,027		230	2.2
1931.....	10,307		221	2.1

<sup>a</sup> For sources, see text and footnote 10.

It is plain that the number of fine arts titles published between 1896 and 1931 did not hold their own, as compared with all book titles published. The percentage of fine art titles in 1931 was less than half what it was in 1896. If we judge not by the number of titles but by the actual number of copies produced, fine art books still make a modest showing, as Table 7 illustrates.

In 1925 copies of art books published in the United States were 0.47 percent of all copies of books published, in 1927 they were 0.38 percent, and in 1929 they were 0.48 percent. If poetry and the drama are added to the fine arts the resulting percentages are 4.4 for 1925, 2.4 for 1927 and 2.2 for 1929. It is possible, of course, that books on the arts, which are expensive in comparison with most other books, are less often bought and more often consulted in libraries. As will be seen in a later chapter, however, library statistics do not show a general relative increase in the use of art books.

<sup>9</sup> See also annual tabulations published by the *Publishers' Weekly*.

<sup>10</sup> *Publishers' Weekly*, annual summary number, January 23, 1932, p. 368.

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TABLE 7.—CENSUS OF BOOKS AND PAMPHLETS PUBLISHED IN THE UNITED STATES IN 1925, 1927 AND 1929\*

Classification	Number of copies		
	1925	1927	1929
Aggregate.....	433,211,253	470,374,947	435,195,833
<i>Books</i>			
Total.....	200,997,249	219,275,544	235,360,032
Textbooks (for school use).....	78,641,843	83,849,864	80,189,935
Juvenile.....	25,218,633	31,047,094	36,885,167
Agriculture.....	463,107	249,441	688,810
Biography.....	2,691,583	2,302,441	2,714,090
Fiction.....	30,598,410	34,087,507	45,880,162
Fine arts.....	1,062,729	837,092	1,138,855
History.....	1,253,147	1,232,033	3,979,604
Law.....	2,239,116	2,493,510	2,942,176
Medicine.....	1,560,169	1,168,755	1,932,909
Poetry and drama.....	8,817,255	4,472,785	4,048,227
Religion and philosophy.....	12,244,224	21,045,076	17,625,949
Science and technology.....	2,094,343	2,030,364	2,294,660
Sociology and economics.....	563,471	834,091	1,052,049
Travel.....	704,825	1,190,569	1,725,631
Miscellaneous.....	32,849,392	32,434,602	32,266,878
<i>Pamphlets</i>			
Total.....	232,214,004	251,099,403	199,835,801
Texts (for school use).....	27,661,513	22,824,621	39,689,158
Juvenile.....	3,481,050	2,739,166	8,273,065
General literature.....	201,071,441	225,535,616	151,878,578

\* From federal *Census of Manufactures*. Also reprinted in *Publishers' Weekly*, February 28, 1931 and January 23, 1932.

Table 8, taken from *Ayers' Newspaper Annual and Directory*, indicates an activity in the field of magazines devoted to the arts.

TABLE 8.—NUMBER OF MAGAZINES PUBLISHED IN FIELDS CONNECTED WITH THE ARTS, 1913, 1921 AND 1929

Subjects	1913	1921	1929
Archaeology.....	...	6	8
Architecture and building.....	67	69	81
Dramatic, dancing.....	20	22	26
Landscape gardening, parks, town planning.....	2	7	12
Totals.....	149	178	222

Some of these magazines are addressed to small and specialized groups of readers, others have an interest for the amateur. The

increase in their number perhaps does something to offset the poor showing made by art books.

Private gifts add year by year, at a varying rate, to our aesthetic capital. As they depend upon individual impulse or, in the case of bequests, upon the well known uncertainty of human life, they do not lend themselves easily to charts and tables. But if we add the artistic windfalls of \$100,000 or more, as recorded in the *American Art Annual*, for each of three decennial years we find that while 1910 yielded \$4,461,118 and 1920 only \$2,613,375, the year 1930 brought gifts that reached a total of \$17,981,500. Nearly all of this large sum went to museums or art centers, and will be considered in those connections later on in our discussion.

At the same time, organized giving to artistic enterprises has increased during the past few years. Some thirty-seven foundations have made grants in this field. Music has had its friends in the Presser and Juilliard Foundations as well as in the Curtis gifts in Philadelphia and those of Eastman in Rochester. The Rockefeller family has made large grants for industrial art and to art museums through the General Education Board, and John D. Rockefeller, Jr., has made personal gifts to museums, to archaeology and for the preservation of natural scenery which run into many millions of dollars. The Carnegie Corporation's gifts, for the decade from 1921 through 1930, included \$3,714,000 for the arts.

Small contributions have been numerous. Dr. Frans Blom of Tulane University states that at the end of 1930 there were fifty-eight organizations conducting field work in archaeology in North America; and this work must be recognized as having a profound influence upon the arts. If we were to explore further toward the fringes of our subject, where art mingles with history or with science, instances of this sort could undoubtedly be multiplied. In Italy, Greece, Egypt, Asia Minor and elsewhere American capital has been invested, not in material goods but in the extension of knowledge about the cultures of the past. Thus, the Cretans, the ancient Egyptians and the Mayas have had an actual influence upon modern ideas of art. Among the agencies whose activities in the archaeological field date from the end of the World War or later may be mentioned the University of Kentucky, the University of Chicago, the University of Illinois, the University of Michigan, the University of Arkansas, the University of

Nebraska, the University of Denver, the University of New Mexico, the Carnegie Institution of Washington, the Historical Commission of Indiana, the Tennessee Archaeological Society, the Archaeological Survey of Connecticut, the West Texas Historical Society, the City Museum of Phoenix, Arizona, the Municipal Museum of Rochester, New York, the New Jersey State Museum, the Museum of Northern Arizona, the Los Angeles Museum, the Southwest Museum, and the Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History.

To push these illustrations further would be to get too far away from the economic considerations to which this chapter has been mainly devoted, and to encroach upon the subject matter of future chapters. Moreover, the statistical method, though valuable as far as it goes, leaves a vast field unexplored. When we come to consider the very important subjects of art in industry, art in business and art in daily life we shall find the art element so thoroughly mingled with the element of utility that it will be hard to assess it in dollars and cents. By way of example Mr. Ford's action a few years ago in his first re-designing of his famous car may be mentioned. There can be no doubt whatever that the aesthetic element was given serious consideration when the change was made, and that to most persons the new car seemed superior in appearance to the old. At the same time many changes were made in the car's operating mechanism. It is impossible to determine to what extent intending purchasers were influenced by the new machine's looks and to what extent they were influenced by its performance. The same problem will be encountered in connection with industrial and commercial design in general. It is probable that design is an increasingly important factor, but it is not a factor that can be measured with precision.

Art is clearly a psychological necessity, since some traces of it are found in any human society. It is not an economic necessity, since life can be maintained without it. For a high development it demands an economic surplus, over and above the necessities of life. It also demands, or reflects, a certain stage of culture—perhaps it is not inaccurate to say a cultural surplus.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE AMERICAN APPROACH TO THE ARTS

THE very fact that we are discussing the arts in America implies a belief that Americans, both as producers, and—if the word may be used in this connection—as consumers, react toward art in a manner peculiar to themselves. Art may be a universal language but it has many different dialects in different times and places. Language sets a barrier to the general diffusion of literature. Even the motion pictures encountered this obstacle when they began to talk. Music is cosmopolitan, yet Occidental music is strange to the Chinese ear and Chinese music to the Western ear. Within these major distinctions are many lesser ones. If we were dealing in formal criticism we should be compelled, in speaking of American art, to go into questions of kind and quality. If these are set aside as not germane to the present purpose it still remains necessary to consider the effect of the American environment upon the extent and progress of the nation's artistic interests.

We have already seen that the circumstances under which the country was settled and developed were not favorable to an early flowering of the arts. The founders of New England, as has often been pointed out, brought to our shores the fruits of the Reformation but not those of the Renaissance. Pioneer conditions led to an emphasis upon material goods which lasted long after pioneer days were over. The settlers and immigrants introduced a variety of cultures, which tended to decline or disappear in the American environment without being replaced by a new and coherent American culture. The Anglo-Saxon, because of his love of land, his tendency to scatter and his individualism, easily lost contact with the traditional influences of community culture. The French and Spanish settlers were more gregarious, but they, too, lost contact with their native lands, and their culture tended to become static.

All this was inevitable. The growth of a new culture, or the consolidation of older elements into what is in effect new, takes

time. Some hundreds of years were required to produce something recognizably English out of the Saxons and Normans, something recognizably French out of such diverse elements as the Basques, the Bretons and the Burgundians. Our far more numerous elements in America were almost frantically engaged, for many generations, in a process which might be called the re-designing of a continent—a process using and producing cultural forces, yet not tending to strengthen the aesthetic impulses. We read the results on the maps, historic and contemporary. We see the first faint lines of trails, leading over the Alleghenies, up the St. Lawrence, down the Mississippi, up the Missouri, the Arkansas and the Platte, over the Roickies and the Sierras to the Pacific; then the heavier lines of roads and railroads and, in our own times, of motor speedways criss-crossing the continent. We see the color and texture of the land changing—forests giving way to grain, deserts turning green, the very atmosphere in the industrial districts smeared with smoke as though a gray brush had been drawn over the picture. But a pattern was emerging.

This pattern in its details was rich and various. The lines and shadings on the map were accompanied at first by an accentuation of local peculiarities, many of which have not even yet been wiped out by the superficial uniformity of the machine age. The New Englander, the Carolinian, the Texan, the Kansan, the New Mexican, the Californian, all probably suggest to the reader fairly definite types, in part racial, in part cultural. Philologists whose hearing is sufficiently sensitive have been known to boast that they could name the state in which any native American was born, provided they could first hear him talk. The history of New England, of the Middle West, of the old slave states of the Confederacy, of the inter-mountain states, of California, first thickly settled by gold seekers, of Washington and Oregon, first settled by farmers, has left its mark on the inhabitants to the present day. The Spanish influence is so much alive in New Mexico that even now legal and legislative proceedings are conducted in two languages.

The constant pouring in of new immigration, up to the beginning of the World War, first from England, Ireland and Northern Europe, then from Northeastern Europe and the Mediterranean littoral, rendered the racial and cultural stream at once richer and

more confused. Those who anticipated an early amalgamation of all these elements spoke hopefully of "The Melting Pot." One hears the phrase less often nowadays. Yet it is evident that, no matter how much time the process may take, something very like a new biological type is in the making in America—a type whose characteristics will be determined in part by the mingling of racial strains, in part by the nature of the country itself.

What, then, is or will be the American approach to the arts? The Puritan tradition has been much stressed, yet there can be little doubt that it has been greatly diluted and that so far as it involves an opposition to artistic expression it is weakening. At any rate America is no longer under the exclusive domination of the Puritanic stock. If the artistic tradition can be imported by importing stocks in which it has been richly developed America has done this in the persons of the German, the Italian and the Jew. If it can be promoted by a variety in climate and scenery, by tenacious survivals of local temperament and custom, combined with an extreme mobility of population, America has those conditions. If it can be either crippled or promoted by an intense industrial development America's advantage or disadvantage in that respect will in time be shared by most other civilized nations. American industrialism is a technological, not a nationalistic phenomenon.

✓ To sum up, there is nothing apparent in American conditions which need be permanently obstructive of a high development of the arts. The story of our pioneering, of our Puritanic distrust of artistic expression, and of our "materialism" is as old as civilization itself, even though we have enacted it on a larger scale than had been before possible. All that is new is the extensive replacement of hand work and handicraft by machine work and machine-craft, which is a world problem, not an American problem. But this same event has made possible a new leisure, of which artistic activities are one of the obvious uses. It has also made possible a limitless duplication of furniture, clothing and objects of daily use; and there is nothing in the nature of machinery which requires that these things be aesthetically inferior. Nor is the American love of the machine demonstrably a barbaric trait. The definition of a good machine is, in part, the definition of a work of art—it must have a pattern without useless or misleading lines; its parts must balance; it must have an objective.

These, it may be said, are all elements of technique and not in themselves art. But they have always accompanied art and have been the vehicles of artistic expression. A machine may express a designer's emotion, just as an oil painting may fail to do so. Moreover, a machine may be the artist's tool, just as much as is the chisel of the sculptor or the brush of the painter. The composer may create music which the violinist plays for the "ladies and gentlemen of the radio audience," but the intrusion of the microphone and receiving apparatus need not render the music mechanical. A chair with good lines is no less a chair with good lines because it is one of ten thousand made by machinery instead of being a unique object made by hand. With modern instruments of precision, which are themselves machines, it is possible to follow an artist's design more faithfully, in wood or metal, in stone or concrete, than would be possible for even the most skillful craftsman without that aid.

X In brief, it is difficult to find in our historical background, in our natural environment, in our racial make-up or in our technological system anything which is necessarily and permanently hostile to art. We are, it is true, a commercial nation. So was Greece during the Age of Pericles, and so were the little warring nations which made up Italy at the time of the Renaissance. Our commercialism, aided by modern means of communication and publication which make it possible to reach almost the entire population almost simultaneously, has expressed itself in attempts at the standardization of taste. But it is perhaps not the standardization of taste that is unfortunate—or would be unfortunate if it could be achieved—but the standardization of "bad" taste. If the artistic endeavors of manufacturers, merchants and advertisers mean anything it is that untrained taste has proved unprofitable and that trained taste is being called in. And this in turn suggests that the consuming public may not be the putty-like mass that we think of when we used the term standardization, but is making choices of its own and imposing standards of its own on those who offer it their goods.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>11</sup> A distinction should be made between standardization, resulting from the machine process, large scale production, national advertising, the motion pictures, etc., and conformity or group solidarity, which does not depend on mechanical civilization for its existence. For interesting data on this point see *Middletown*, by Robert S. Lynd and Helen Merrell Lynd, New York, 1929, especially the chapter on "Things Making and Unmaking Group Solidarity."



Something may be said as to the positive side of America's potentialities in the arts. Art is a product of imagination, and imagination cannot transcend experience. Individual art rests on individual experience, the stamp of group art is derived from group experience. America, as has been shown, is peculiarly rich in racial experience. It shares the artistic heritage of Europe—indeed, it has brought to its own shores no inconsiderable amount of that portion of the European heritage which is tangible. Europe's culture is woven into its own and is part of the educational equipment of the average American artist. The art of Africa has come not only directly but also indirectly in the racial aptitudes of that one-twelfth of the population which is classified as Negro. The art of the Spanish-American and that of the Aztec and Mayan, revived and studied in Mexico in recent years, has already had an influence in America. Looking westward as well as eastward, as we do, we find ourselves exposed to art influences from China and Japan, though these may first have come to us by way of Paris. We have been as hospitable to foreign art as we were during most of our history to foreign immigration, and we have no tariff or quota for modern ideas of art. Such international art exhibitions as those held by the Carnegie Institute at Pittsburgh, and those to be found in our museums and in our public and private art galleries, have had a large influence.

A study of 6,600 painters, sculptors and illustrators following their professions in America several years ago indicated that 20 percent were of foreign birth; among singers and musicians a majority were foreign born. Such names as Damrosch, Bodansky, Stransky, Gabrilowitsch, Hofman, Schumann-Heinck, Fremstad, Galli-Curci, Bitter, Polasek, Edstrom, Lie, Benda and Pogany tell the story of a far flung contribution of many strains and cultures to American life. Among patrons of the arts are found such names as those of Andrew Carnegie, a Scot; Otto Kahn, a native of Germany; and Edward Bok, a Hollander. Dramatic and musical clubs and "sokols" among the Finns, Hollanders, Latvians, Italians, Lithuanians, Poles, Jugoslavs and others help to keep alive racial cultures and to adapt them to the American environment. In cosmopolitan cities settlement houses, museums and recreation departments frequently do much to encourage the preservation of folk songs, folk dances and folk arts. Cleveland has a recreation

division in its Park Department which reports twenty definite contacts with the foreign born, eleven of them in the arts. The Detroit Institute of Art, a city institution which grew out of a private organization, has definitely tried, and with some success, to interest Jugoslavic, Czech, Greek, Polish, and other citizens of foreign derivation in the arts of their native countries, and to have such arts well represented in its museums.

The Indian and the Negro stand in a peculiar position among our "foreign" elements in that, though diverging more widely from the norm of our population than any immigrant races except the Orientals, they are not "foreigners" at all. The Indian can claim an American ancestry which makes the passengers on the *Mayflower* or even the descendants of the Conquistadores seem like immigrants of yesterday. The Negro was brought to this country so early that he is fairly entitled to rank with our first families. To what extent have these two races entered into our national cultural pattern? Admittedly, the Indian's contributions are relatively slight, though in many ways he has undoubtedly left a subtle imprint which is not evident on the face of the record. His scheme of life differed so widely from that of the conquering whites that with some exceptions it was destroyed instead of being assimilated. His lands were taken, the game which was the basis of the tribal economy of many tribes was exterminated, and often he became an impoverished pensioner of the whites. When this did not happen he became a farmer, not always able to compete successfully with the whites. The Pueblo Indians, partially Christianized before the landing at Plymouth Rock, have retained their communal life, and the Navajos have developed into independent sheepherders who still speak the ancient tribal tongue.

In recent years there has been a revival of the old tribal arts among the Pueblos and the Navajos, resulting in a production of blankets, beads, silverware and even, in the case of the Pueblos, of paintings. The tribal dances here and there survive and are often performed for the diversion of tourists who have paid to witness them. Mary Austin and others have tried with some success to recapture and preserve the old Indian melodies of the Southwest; and some of these ancient themes have been utilized by American and even European composers, though it is doubtful that the Indians would recognize them in their adapted form.

That the Indian has influenced certain white artists is indisputable. That he will have a perceptible influence upon American art is by no means certain. An Indian critique of aboriginal Indian life, expressed in aesthetic terms, can have only a historical interest, even for the Indian. An Indian reaction to the life of modern America, based on an objective understanding of that life, would, of course, be more significant. It is not easy to discern such a reaction in such expositions as that of Indian Tribal Arts which was shown in New York city and elsewhere in 1931 and 1932, creditable though that exposition was. The Indian is at a transitional point. His ancient art forms are losing their significance and he has not mastered those of the white man. In the Southwest his artistic activities may be stimulated by those of his neighbors across the Mexican border, more Indian than Spanish, who have already given original and notable artists to their own country.

The Negro, torn loose from his ancient tribal organization, scattered about the country wherever his new owners found his services useful, able to preserve no family records, deprived of all but the most primitive means of expressing his emotions in aesthetic form, has found himself in a position totally different from that of the Indian. The only traditions which could survive in his case were those which could be transmitted by voice and gesture from one generation to another. The tribal languages survived only in accents and dialects—sometimes, as in the case of the so-called Gullahs along the Carolina coast, so obscure as to be practically unintelligible to the average English speaking person. Superstitions, dances and harmonic and melodic traditions have persisted. But in the Negro, more than in the Indian, there has seemed to be a reconciliation between the racial temperament and the white man's civilization. The Negro was forced to adapt himself to slavery and he has adapted himself with growing success to freedom. It is only superficially that he has become an imitation white man. His emotional expressiveness and his taste for color, for rhythm and for choral singing are distinctively his own.

The popular success enjoyed by Negro actors in "Emperor Jones," "Porgy" and "The Green Pastures"; the popularity of Negro singers and musicians; the rise of such outstanding figures as Countee Cullen among poets, Claude McKay among writers of fiction, and Roland Hayes and Paul Robeson among singers,

indicates the ability of the Negro to compete successfully with other races in the field of the arts, and—which is more important from the point of view of the present inquiry—to contribute something peculiarly his own to aesthetics. The transmutation of folk art into formal and conscious art is not easy, but the Negro is apparently beginning to make it. Just how far he can master and build upon the white man's technique without impairing his own racial quality is, of course, a question yet to be determined. Professor Alain Locke of Howard University sees in "the growing maturity of the young Negro artists" the advent "of a representatively racial school of expression, and an important new contribution, therefore, to the whole body of American art."<sup>12</sup>

It would be interesting, but perhaps dangerous, to speculate upon the influence of climate and topography upon American artists, present and to come. The direct effect of the natural environment upon scenic painters is obvious. A painter in a cloudy or foggy atmosphere is conditioned to more subtle values of light and color than one who spends most of his time in brilliant sunlight, though because of stylistic influences these values may not always be found in his paintings. The soft greens of New England, the browns and yellows of California, the dazzling whites and flaming colors of the arid regions, the softness of the Southern atmosphere, must all have an effect upon those who are artistically inclined.

The modern domestic architect consciously uses landscape as part of his composition; he sets his house so that it blends harmoniously with existing lines, textures or colors. Consequently a regional architecture that is not wholly traditional or wholly patterned on cosmopolitan styles is growing up—witness the "prairie houses" of Frank Lloyd Wright. We have a number of schools of regional painters, though none of them stick as faithfully to what they see about them as did the artists of the Hudson River School early in the nineteenth century. Provincetown, Woodstock, Taos and Carmel stamp those who most frequent them, whether conservative or modernist. A Southwestern school of painting might have figured in our artistic history if settlement in those regions had reached its present stage a century earlier,

<sup>12</sup> For a brief discussion of this idea see his "The Negro in Art," *Bulletin of the Association of American Colleges*, November, 1931, pp. 359-364.

for an enthusiasm for the region is apparent in those who work there. But we must not take regionalism too literally. Many modern artists are just as likely to derive their inspiration from an abstract idea originally let loose in Paris as from the flaming mountain or the shaded bayou seen from their own doorsteps. The regional art of America, if it develops, will probably be something more subtle than a mere reflection of material environment.

We find our American approach to the arts, to sum up, affected by the elements mentioned—the Puritanic background, which has been discussed to the point of tedium by numerous commentators; the unparalleled intermingling of diverse races; the gigantic national topography; and the fact that we are ahead of other nations in application of and devotion to machinery. We have constructed, at least in our cities, an artificial environment that is a totally new thing in the world, and that must affect those who live in it just as the natural environment affects others. Men adapt themselves to skyscrapers, traffic congestion, subways, the clash of metal, the whirling of big and little wheels, because they have to, just as, for the same reason, they once adapted themselves to trees, uninterrupted skies and ploughed fields. If the impulse toward artistic expression is in them these things must affect the kind of art they produce, for they either accept them or they resent them, in either case emotionally, and out of such emotional adjustments come the arts. Impersonality is the key to machinery; it is also the key to some kinds of modern art. Pure geometric form is possible in machines and buildings, though in nature it is rarely visible to the naked eye. It is not strange, therefore, that artists in industrial and urbanized societies like our own sometimes resolve their problems in terms of geometric abstractions. The American approach to the arts may, nevertheless, be part of a movement toward softening the angularities and removing the neuroses of their civilization.

## CHAPTER V

### ART EDUCATION: THE SCHOOLS

**I**N A country in which almost every child goes to the common school, in which about one in two of high school age are in high school, and in which about one-eighth of those who reach the college age go to college, the role of any teachable subject in the national life is likely to be measured sooner or later by its place in the curriculum. At the same time it is possible to judge of the changing emphases on different phases of the subject by the same criterion. Looked at in this way the educational system in America gives evidence that the arts have been increasing in popularity, rapidly during the past decade, more slowly during several generations. This increase we shall measure largely in the field of "fine" arts, for which data are readily accessible.

The increase has been uneven and the theories back of it have altered. The original attempts to give professional training have expanded; the training of non-professional students in "appreciation" has been supplemented by the newer method of "learning by doing." Many if not most art teachers now maintain that art is, in part at least, a language of which almost any one may master the rudiments, just as almost any one may master the rudiments of written and spoken English. The opportunity to test his ability in drawing, painting, modeling or designing, or in singing and general musicianship, is open to the average child in every up to date school system.

The history of art education in the United States may be described as a resultant of two trends—that of the rising interest in art and that of the extension and elaboration of education in general. Artists in colonial times were self-taught, served apprenticeships with practitioners in their own fields, or studied abroad. The first formal education in the arts on this side of the Atlantic seems to have been offered by the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts. In the early 1790's Charles Willson Peale organized an art society which held its first exhibition in Philadelphia in 1795.

A decade later Peale joined with other artists and prominent laymen in incorporating the Academy "to promote the cultivation of the Fine Arts in the United States of America by introducing correct and elegant copies from works of the first Masters in Sculpture and Painting, and by thus facilitating the access of such Standards, and also by conferring moderate but honorable premiums, and otherwise assisting the Studies and exciting the efforts of the Artists, gradually to unfold, enlighten and invigorate the talents of our Countrymen." The Academy flourished and exists to this day, largely as a school of the "fine" arts. The National Academy of Design, of New York city, of which Samuel Finley Breese Morse was the first president, was founded in 1825. Its school had and still has rigorous entrance requirements and a rigorous course, with emphasis upon a thorough grounding in traditions and methods. The Pennsylvania Academy and the National Academy are typical of long established art schools which, though they may produce modernists, are firmly rooted in tradition.

Art courses as part of the pabulum offered to the undergraduate may be said to have begun with Charles Eliot Norton, who was called to Harvard in 1873. The Harvard of Norton's day, unlike that of recent years, furnished no instruction in the practice of the arts. Norton's ambition was, as he himself expressed it, to inspire his students "with love of things that make life beautiful and generous." He ran a one-man show at first, but in time Harvard's art teaching staff was vastly increased, taking shape around the old Fogg Museum, and later the new one, and supplementing theory with practice and research. Other colleges and universities introduced first "cultural" courses, then practical ones—which, of course, most educators believe to be also cultural in their effects. At Princeton the arts took a distinguished scholarly turn; at Oberlin, founded in 1833 by the Congregationalists, a school of art was added to a school of music; at the state universities a vigorous interest in the arts, late in starting, has manifested itself in the later years. It is an interesting fact that these publicly supported art schools in the state universities bear no resemblance to the state-controlled "Academies" which have played such an important role in the art history of Europe. In so far as a political demand is made upon them it is for "practicality" rather than for the preservation of tradition.

## ART EDUCATION: THE SCHOOLS

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Schools for the practical training of artists, with an eye to gainful and useful employment after graduation, were a little later in developing than those for teaching the "fine" arts alone. In 1870 the Massachusetts State Legislature passed a law stipulating that "in future every child in schools supported by public taxes shall be taught to draw." This act led to the establishment of the Massachusetts School of Art, as it is now called, the first and only state-supported school of its kind. This institution devoted itself at first to the training of teachers and later to the education of practitioners of the arts as well. Royal Bailey Farnum, now educational director of the Rhode Island School of Design, was especially instrumental, as principal of the school and director of art education for the State of Massachusetts between 1921 and 1929, in linking the courses up with the commercial and industrial life of the commonwealth.

The Pratt Institute of Brooklyn, founded in 1887, was at first a trade school with a "Drawing Department." The trade school grew into a School of Science and Technology, the "Drawing Department" into a School of Fine and Applied Arts. Students in both schools are preparing to earn their living and in the art school the distinction between "fine" and "applied" arts has no standing. Another practical-minded institution, which tries "to give workers a thorough training in the fundamental principles of design and the practical application of these to every branch of artistic production" is the Pennsylvania Museum's School of Industrial Arts, which came into being in 1876, the Centennial year. The Cleveland School of Art, founded in 1882 and rising to prominence under the administration of the late Henry Turner Bailey, took as its objective "to train each student intensively for some particular field of work." It was Bailey's ambition, and is doubtless that of the present administration, to "sell the school to Cleveland."

The College of Fine Arts at the Carnegie Institute of Technology in Pittsburgh was established in 1916, a decade after the opening of the Institute. The course is collegiate and an effort is made to give the student a general cultural background in addition to his training in the technique of painting, sculpture, architecture, music or drama. The Art Institute of Chicago, now well along in its sixth decade, is said to have had in its classes at one time or another



one-fifth of all living American artists. It is a practical art school which had had a great influence on American design as well as on the "fine" arts. It has recently opened a graduate industrial arts school, with the object of providing highly trained "key men" for the industries and businesses which require them.

Perhaps the most independent of all American art schools is the Art Students' League of New York city, founded in 1875 as a revolt against the supposed conservatism of the Academy of Design. It admits any one who can pay its fees, gives no degrees or certificates, and has had among its teachers a high proportion of the American artists of importance since its establishment. Its organization is so loose that it can be described as neither modernist nor conservative, though it doubtless enlists many students who are impatient of the restraints of the more formal schools.

Schools of music took hold more readily in the United States during the early years—partly, no doubt, because of the association of music with religious services—than did schools of art. Yale, Oberlin and Pittsburgh may be cited as illustrations of different types, largely though not exclusively devoted to the training of teachers; the Eastman School of Music at Rochester and the Curtis School of Music are late comers, magnificently endowed, and seriously attempting to train virtuosi and composers as well as teachers. Schools of the drama have flourished in recent years at Carnegie, at the Chicago Art Institute, at Harvard, where Professor George Pierce Baker founded drama courses, at Yale, to which Professor Baker was called after his experience at Harvard, and in a number of state universities.

This is not a complete list of even the leading institutions giving comprehensive courses in the various arts, but it may indicate the variety of types, some of which will be considered in greater detail later on in the discussion. It is apparent that there has been a steady growth of interest in arts courses, in the number of institutions giving them, and in the number of students pursuing them. It is clear, also, that the laboratory method, if it can be called that, has made headway against the older-fashioned lecture method. There are still many distinguished teachers whose methods are reminiscent of those of Professor Norton, but even the student who seeks nothing but "culture" ordinarily does some painting, drawing or modelling in most contemporary courses in the arts.

## ART EDUCATION: THE SCHOOLS

The records of art schools and art courses show a large, if not spectacular, increase in registration during the decade from 1920 to 1930.<sup>13</sup> Table 9 presents the figures for eighteen schools for this period.

TABLE 9.—REGISTRATIONS OF 18 ART SCHOOLS, 1920-1921, 1925 AND 1930

Schools	1920 or 1921	1925	1930
Art Institute (Chicago).....	4,267	3,783	4,301
California School of Arts and Crafts (Oakland).....	357	456	522
California School of Fine Arts (San Francisco).....	613	889	895
Carnegie Institute of Technology (Pittsburgh).....	390	584	633
Cleveland School of Art.....	792	976	1,222
Graphic Sketch Club (Philadelphia).....	700	1,500	2,000
John Herron Art Institute (Indianapolis).....	75	209	255
National Academy of Design (New York).....	201	512	518
New York School of Fine and Applied Art.....	900	1,270	1,369
Otis Art Institute (Los Angeles).....	197	503	548
Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts (Philadelphia).....	275	291	299
Pennsylvania Museum School of Industrial Art (Philadelphia)....	902	1,051	1,026
Philadelphia School of Design for Women.....	134	375	427
Pratt Institute (Brooklyn).....	1,211	1,589	2,034
Rhode Island School of Design (Providence).....	676	914	1,246
School of Applied Art, Mechanics Institute (Rochester, New York)	75	102	146
Washington University (St. Louis).....	260	360	496
Yale School of Fine Arts.....	44	124	150
<b>Total.....</b>	<b>12,069</b>	<b>14,648</b>	<b>18,087</b>

It will be observed that no school showed a decline in registration between the beginning and the end of the decade. The Chicago Art Institute dropped sharply between 1920 and 1925, then rose to a little above its figure at the beginning of the period. The Pennsylvania Museum School dropped slightly between 1925 and 1930. The increase for all the schools listed for the first part of the period was 2,579, as compared with 3,439 for the second part. As both 1920 and 1930 were years of business depression the effect of this factor upon registrations may perhaps be disregarded.

How did the changes in art school registrations compare with those for general registrations in institutions of the higher learning? Table 10, which is taken from statistics for the thirty largest colleges and universities throws some light on this subject.

<sup>13</sup> Much of the material here presented is taken from a report made by Royal B. Farnum, now educational director of the Rhode Island School of Design, in 1931. Mr. Farnum visited thirty-three art centers throughout the country, and supplemented the information thus gained by an examination of reports from fifty-two others.

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TABLE 10.—REGISTRATIONS IN ART SCHOOLS AND ARCHITECTURAL SCHOOLS CONNECTED WITH THE 30 LARGEST COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES, TOGETHER WITH FULL TIME ENROLLMENT OF ALL STUDENTS IN THE SAME INSTITUTIONS\*

Year	Art schools		Architectural schools		Total full time registration in 30 largest colleges and universities
	Number	Registration	Number	Registration	
1920.....	5	517	9	515	132,091
1925.....	10	1,307	10	2,668	169,440
1930.....	14	2,039	11	3,526	198,164

\* From *School and Society*.

Slight discrepancies may arise in this table from the fact that some colleges have changed the classification of art courses from Art School to Architectural School and *vice versa*, but this does not, of course, affect the ratio between art students and architectural students on the one hand and the full time institutional enrollment on the other. If art and architectural students are taken together we find a total of 1,032 in 1920, 3,975 in 1925 and 5,565 in 1930. There was an increase of 285 percent in these two classifications between 1920 and 1925, an increase of 40 percent between 1925 and 1930, and a total increase of 439 percent for the whole period from 1920 to 1930. The total of all full time students in the thirty institutions increased 28 percent between 1920 and 1925 and 16 percent between 1925 and 1930, or a total increase for the period of 50 percent.

TABLE 11.—REGISTRATIONS IN ART COURSES AT HARVARD AND RADCLIFFE

Year	Harvard	Radcliffe
1919-1920.....	541	100
1924-1925.....	769	291
1929-1930.....	1,217	450

The registrations in courses in the arts in Harvard College and Radcliffe for a ten year period are shown in Table 11. Here we have one of the components of the totals just given for thirty institutions of higher learning. It is perhaps immaterial whether we ascribe such increases to more and better courses or to a spontaneous growth of interest among the students themselves, or to a

## ART EDUCATION: THE SCHOOLS

combination of the two. This is the old question of whether the hen or the egg came first or whether both came simultaneously.

The proportion of men to women students is of importance in any study of art school registrations. Table 12 shows the twelve years' record of the school of the National Academy of Design, whose gross figures have already been given.

TABLE 12.—REGISTRATIONS OF MEN AND WOMEN AT THE SCHOOL OF THE NATIONAL ACADEMY OF DESIGN, FROM 1920 TO 1931 INCLUSIVE

Enrollment for year ending in April—	Men	Women	Total
1920.....	160	41	201
1921.....	272	103	375
1922.....	299	150	449
1923.....	334	167	501
1924.....	331	165	496
1925.....	347	165	512
1926.....	368	206	574
1927.....	373	238	611
1928.....	400	273	673
1929.....	342	238	580
1930.....	310	208	518
1931.....	349	197	546

The women were a little under twenty-four percent of the whole number in 1920, nearly thirty-six percent in 1931. If we add together the figures for the first three and the last three years of the period in order to iron out short time fluctuations we find that women composed about 28.6 percent of the enrollment for the years 1920-1922 inclusive and a little over 39 percent for the years 1929-1931 inclusive. These figures may be contrasted with Mr. Farnum's estimate<sup>14</sup> of the membership of art courses in the colleges and universities as being about seventy percent feminine. Art in the co-educational colleges has had a hard battle to free itself from the implication of effeminacy, though men in such institutions take art courses more freely than they did. The more specific and practical the course the more it seems to appeal to young American manhood. The percentage of women is highest in the general cultural art courses in co-educational institutions, lowest in the professional schools of architecture. But as men make their way into the cultural courses women begin to invade the schools of architecture, formerly almost entirely closed to them.

<sup>14</sup> See footnote 13.

Mr. Farnum has made an informal analysis of the present status of art in the colleges and universities, which is here presented.

"The colleges," Mr. Farnum states, "leave thoroughness in technical art training to the art schools, although the last ten years have seen a gradual increase in art courses, which has kept pace with the advance of the total enrollment. Where a definite art school connected with the university is not maintained the art departments are, for the most part, inadequate in art practice.

"In the last ten years, however, numerous changes have been made in courses and policies. Commercial art and advertising, art appreciation and landscape design are more definitely stressed. Practically all universities have an 'Art' department now, where, in 1920, they classified art subjects under other departments, or a general heading of 'Drawing and Design.' The art departments in most cases offer drawing, design, painting, modeling, crafts, teaching methods, and history and appreciation. The increase in enrollment in art courses between 1920 and 1930 averages 30 percent.<sup>15</sup> Interest in music has been greater, with a 60 percent increase in ten years."

Increases in enrollment, increases in the number and variety of the courses offered and a pronounced trend toward "learning by doing" seem in general to be characteristic of art in the colleges during the last decade.

To quote further from Mr. Farnum's notes: "The demands of the public schools for teachers with degrees has caused a number of art schools to affiliate with local colleges and universities, in order that academic instruction can be given with a degree of Bachelor of Science or Bachelor of Fine Arts upon completion of the combined work. Such schools are the Chicago Art Institute; Herron Art Institute, Indianapolis; California School of Arts and Crafts; Cleveland School of Art; School of Applied Arts, Rochester, New York; and the New York School of Fine and Applied Art . . . A number of universities offer art courses during the summer sessions. These have increased from 25 to 50 percent during the last ten years. In addition to these there are summer classes run

<sup>15</sup> This figure should not be confused with those for registration in art and architectural schools attached to colleges and universities, which, as has been shown in a previous table, amounted in the case of the thirty largest institutions to 439 percent, in 1930, of the corresponding registration for 1920.

by most of the regular art schools, and also a number of separate summer 'schools of art.' The tendency is for the separate summer schools to be located on the seashore or among the hills and mountains, where students can combine a vacation with art work. The enrollment has increased from 1920 to 1930 in practically every case, averaging from 20 to 100 percent."

During his survey Mr. Farnum asked hundreds of persons, "Do you think there has been an increased interest and development in art education during the past ten years?" He received but one negative reply, the man interrogated in this case believing that there had been a decrease in the art interest due to increased emphasis on vocational education. Others to whom the question was put were of the opinion that the demand for art education had been somewhat in excess of the abilities of institutions to meet them, either in equipment or in a force of competent teachers. If this statement is true it must follow that the figures of art course enrollments understate rather than overstate the public's interest in the subject. At Haverford College students were asked to indicate their preferences as to courses not as yet included in the curriculum. One-third of the student body placed the arts at the head of their lists. The art impulse sometimes expresses itself in the form of student dramatics, which have made rapid advances during the decade but are not always included in the curriculum. In some cases professorial conservatism has held back the introduction of practical courses.<sup>16</sup>

Among the special subjects in the higher institutions music has gained more rapidly than the pictorial arts, its total enrollment climbing 60 percent between 1920 and 1930 while the general enrollment in art courses was going up 30 percent. On the other hand, nine out of ten independent conservatories selected as leading examples have shown a recent decrease in enrollment and only six out of thirteen university music schools have shown a recent increase. Extra-curricular student music at colleges and universities is reported to be improving in quality. The Inter-collegiate Musical Council, one of whose avowed objects is to encourage the performance of better music by students, has

<sup>16</sup> The scholarly as distinguished from the creative impulse has, however, produced some notable results. Harvard has carried the study of paintings by the aid of the X-ray and chemical analysis further than any other institution in the world. Princeton has made noteworthy contributions to the history of medieval art.

grown from four college glee clubs in 1914 to about 100 at the present time, and has a membership of about 6,000 singers. Women's glee clubs have grown in number and mixed choral societies sometimes give concerts, as at a number of the state universities. Orchestral music in colleges is not generally considered to have reached as high a level as singing. Bands are, of course, numerous. A survey made in 1926-1927 showed that about 3,500 men and 170 women were then playing in the bands of 54 institutions. In 1930 about one-third of 594 institutions surveyed allowed some credit for singing and playing, and 452 granted entrance credit in music. But music as a college subject, though it has made some gains, is not yet important. Indeed, Professor John Erskine, president of the Juilliard School of Music, declares categorically that "the college provides no leisure for this art and gives no credit for the acquisition of this culture."

Another special subject, architecture, has been coming to the front in recent years, though primarily as a field of professional training rather than as part of a general college course. Of the fifty-two institutions of collegiate rank in the United States which offer professional courses in architecture leading to an academic degree, thirty-nine have been established since 1900, nineteen since 1910 and eleven since 1920. Most of these schools are situated in the northeastern quarter of the country. Canada has six such schools. Of the fifty-eight in the United States and Canada combined, thirty-eight are affiliated with universities, eleven with technical institutes and nine with state colleges of agriculture and mechanical arts. All but twenty offer courses to students other than those intending to make architecture a career. In 1930 there were about 2,200 non-professional students in such courses. Perhaps 1,000 more were taking courses given by architectural professors who were also members of a fine arts faculty. In the United States as a whole in 1930, according to Deans Bosworth and Jones,<sup>17</sup> there were 6,006 professional students of architecture, of whom 696 were graduated in that year. The states having the largest number of architectural students were: New York, 703; Pennsylvania, 623; Illinois, 578; Texas, 434; Ohio, 419; California, 386; Massachusetts, 303; Michigan, 279; Minnesota, 257.

<sup>17</sup> See F. H. Bosworth, Jr., and Roy Childs Jones, *A Study of Architectural Schools*, 1932 (Scribner), made for the Association of Collegiate Schools of Architecture.

## ART EDUCATION: THE SCHOOLS

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So far this chapter has dealt with the institutions of higher learning and the technical schools. From these schools will come the practitioners of the arts of tomorrow, together with many of the leaders of public opinion who may have much to do with the popular attitude toward the arts. A larger and even more important group consists of the children in the primary and secondary schools from which will be recruited not only the artists but the artists' public of the day after tomorrow. A survey of progress in the arts made in 1943 or 1953 may well be considered as a test of the efficacy of the teaching methods of 1933.

For at least a decade the whole educational system has felt the effect of a growing interest in at least some of the departments of the arts. Experiments made first in private schools have been in many cases imitated in the public schools. The museums, whose educational activities will be considered in the next chapter, have had much to do with encouraging school children to draw, paint and model. It was a museum director who said that it ought to be as easy for a child to draw a cow as to describe one.

Except in the case of music, progress in the teaching of art has gone forward more rapidly in the elementary than in the secondary schools. One reason for this may be that it is difficult to prevent young children from drawing, and that guidance rather than special instruction is usually all that is needed. For the higher grades specially trained teachers are necessary. Yet in such cities as New York, Detroit, Cleveland and Chicago it is now possible for a child to keep on with his art studies through his entire public school career and to graduate from high school with a good grounding in technique. Whether he has more than that will depend, of course, upon his native ability. Educators are of the opinion, however, that a child or adult with some acquaintance with the technique of the arts will be better able to enjoy them in his daily life, even though he is not himself a creator of beauty, either as a way of making a living or as a hobby.

An examination of the records of the public schools in representative cities between 1920 and 1930, as compiled by Mr. Farnum, shows a decided increase in the number of elementary pupils taking courses in the arts, including music, and in the number of art and music teachers in the schools. The quality of the instruction is not indicated, of course, in such statistical tables.



We may assume, perhaps, that it will vary with the general quality of the teaching, which is in large part a reflection of the per capita expenditures on education. Long Beach, with a per capita expenditure of \$24.30 on schools in 1927, certainly should not be put unweighted in the same table with Knoxville, Tennessee, which spent \$8.60 per capita.

Mr. Farnum found that in Boston the number of art teachers, though not all of them were on full time, rose from 64 in 1920 to 128 in 1930; the cost of art equipment from \$21,209 to \$39,584; and the number of senior high school students taking art courses from 2,575 to 4,650. In Buffalo the number of art teachers during the same period increased from 40 to 98; the number of senior high school students taking art from 2,000 to 4,510; and the cost of art equipment from \$12,000 to \$22,000. In Philadelphia all elementary school children and 25,895 out of the 34,929 in the senior high school were taking art courses; there were 226 art teachers in addition to the grade teachers who taught art as well as other subjects; and art equipment for the high schools and the normal school cost \$118,000. Comparative figures for 1920 were not available.

Baltimore's art teachers and supervisors had increased from 32 to 87; its music teachers and supervisors from 7 to 79; and its senior high school students in art courses from 659 to 5,906. In Pittsburgh there were 52 teachers of arts and crafts in the high schools in 1930 as against 18 in 1920; the number of junior high school students taking art had risen from 1,650 to 11,787 and of senior high school students from 984 to 2,907; and the annual cost of supplies for the art classes had gone up from \$20,378 to \$27,324. In Detroit the number of junior high school students taking art courses rose from 438 to 12,901, and of senior high school students from 1,792 to 3,445. In Kansas City, Missouri, there were 8 teachers of art in 1920 and 33 in 1930, 6 teachers of music in 1920 and 33 in 1930; and the annual cost of art supplies in the school rose in the same period from \$425 to \$11,500.

In Los Angeles the number of high school teachers of art rose from 59 in 1920 to 247 in 1930; all elementary school children were taking art courses in 1930 and there were 247 art shops and studios. Comparative data from other cities were difficult to obtain, but there is no reason to believe that similar results might not be

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secured by a study of data from modern city school systems throughout the country.

The significance of increases in art course registration depends in part on the contemporaneous increase in total school registration. Table 13 affords comparisons for five cities.

TABLE 13.—ART COURSE REGISTRATIONS AND TOTAL REGISTRATIONS IN HIGH SCHOOLS OF FIVE CITIES, 1920-1930

City	Registrations in senior high schools		Registrations in senior high school art courses	
	1920	1930	1920	1930
Boston.....	14,294	23,570	2,575	4,650
Buffalo.....	10,000	15,350	2,000	4,510
Baltimore.....	6,806	11,256	659	5,906
Pittsburgh.....	10,077	14,711	984	2,907
Detroit.....	17,306	32,637	1,792	3,445

The most striking increase here is in the case of Baltimore, where 9.6 percent of the senior high school students were taking art courses in 1920 and 52.4 percent in 1930. In Buffalo and Pittsburgh, also, the increase in the number of students taking art courses far outran the increase in total enrollment.

The actual change in art instruction in the grades is harder to determine, since in most cases all pupils have been required throughout the decade to take art courses of one kind or another. It may be supposed that instruction has improved in quality, and the general opinion is that it has done so, but there are few data with which to measure such improvement. The tendency of systematic instruction in art in the high school is probably to stimulate interest in the same subject in the grades. If a pupil's art instruction normally ceases with graduation from grammar school, on the other hand, there is little incentive for pupil or teacher to make a serious job of it.

By this time it should be apparent that there are not one but many systems of art education in the United States. Elementary education in the arts is one thing, secondary education another; the college, the professional school and the technical art school differ among themselves and from what has gone before. A confusing diversity of paths lies before the young person who is drawn

toward the arts, and the average child, in cases where his interests are not primarily artistic, may or may not come in contact with training that will fit him for aesthetic enjoyment in later life.

The teaching of art in the common schools is a comparatively modern development, though, as has been seen, Massachusetts installed it on a statewide scale in the 1870's. In 1900 the Paris Exposition afforded an opportunity for a meeting of art teachers and an exhibition of the work of school children all over the world. A similar Congress held in London in 1908, says Mr. Farnum,<sup>18</sup> "so affected Germany that the Emperor took steps immediately to promote special schools of art and art courses in art-using industries, just as the great Napoleon had done years before in France." The war interrupted internationalism in the arts as in every other phase of human life, but it was followed by an upward surge of new ideas in art education as well as in artistic creation.

To quote again from Mr. Farnum: "An interval of school surveys and curricula studies set in, often with a scientific curriculum-maker in charge. Previously an art teacher made her own course of study, or, where the specialist was not employed, the regular teacher may have followed quite literally a graded drawing text-book. Now, however, the science of education was applied to the special field, with the result that soon Art, Music, Dramatics, etc., took on a new meaning, and were adopted into the enlarging fold of general curricular activities. That for which art education leaders had been vainly striving for fifty years was now bearing fruit, but with it came a new conception of the job of teaching art. The old drawing lesson in a segregated series of three thirty-minute periods a week must give place to a correlated project related to many other subjects. Formal drawing now began to receive less time, Art a greatly increased amount, as it began to function more successfully."

There was a greater demand than before for teachers of art, though as far as the elementary and secondary schools were concerned it was responded to by women rather than men. In general public school teaching, of course, it has long been difficult to secure the services of high grade men.

<sup>18</sup> Here, and in the discussion that follows, we have again drawn on the researches of Royal B. Farnum, already quoted. The following quotations and data are taken from his *Art Education in the United States*, prepared as a part of the Biennial Report of the Bureau of Education for 1931.

But despite difficulties art has made its way into the schools during the past few years in many forms—in special courses, in assistance rendered to school dramatics, as a means of tying up the schools with home and community interests, and as a means by which children are trained for commercial and industrial life. A few years ago a child in a country school might, without knowing or asking why, be set to draw a cube, an apple, or a leaf, in pencil on white paper. Such exercises were the limit of artistic education for hundreds of thousands of children. Now, even in the very early grades, and even in the schools of small towns and rural districts, it is not unlikely that he may work with paints, brushes, and with weaving, wood-working, metal-working and even engraving tools. In city schools he will probably make regular visits to the art museum, listen to gallery talks prepared for his special benefit, and perhaps do some drawing of his own. Many schools have loan collections of paintings, copies of paintings and slides. The gifted child often has a chance to express himself in artistic form before he has mastered his arithmetical tables or his spelling.

Community cooperation often plays a part in interesting children in art. In Fort Worth a school arts society has been organized, which has enrolled 47 percent of the pupils in one school and 27 percent in another. The society made plans in 1930 to buy twenty original paintings and prints to be circulated among the schools, and hoped to supplement this little collection with pottery, decorative fabrics and other art material. In Dallas the school children are often called upon to make posters for special occasions, such as "humane week" and "flower week." Cleveland, with its customary thoroughness, has within the past decade developed art instruction to a point where any boy or girl may pursue studies in this field from the early grades through high school and the university or art school. In Detroit there are after-school classes for gifted children in the public schools, from the first grade through high school. In Chicago similar arrangements are made for gifted children through the Art Institute. In Kansas City an experienced art supervisor has brought art to the fore in the public schools during the last half decade. In the village of Springville, Utah, as a result of a campaign to increase art interest, fifty percent of the high school students enrolled in art courses, and the public school has a collection of 165 paintings valued at \$100,000.

California cities show increased enrollments and a development of new methods in art courses. One educator, Rudolph Schaeffer, has had much to do with freeing students of all ages from the rather mechanical methods of the older style of art education. Even in the grades, as Mr. Farnum testifies, children may be found discussing abstract aesthetic principles with their teachers and then, on their own initiative, trying them out. Since 1923 Los Angeles has required all high school students to take courses in the appreciation of music and art. The proximity of Hollywood lends pertinence to studies connected with the stage. The same requirements are made in Pasadena. In Long Beach it is stated that half the money appropriated for books and material for all teachers was spent for the art classes.

On the other side of the continent the nation's largest city is following California's example in putting art courses into the public school curriculum. Since 1930 a course in art appreciation has been required for all of New York City's first and second year high school students. "This course," stated Associate Superintendent Harold G. Campbell, in the announcement of the new classes, "designed to give to all, and especially to those who have no marked technical ability, a chance to study creatively the art that is related to their immediate surroundings, is apparently meeting a genuine need. It is, moreover, provoking unusual interest in the development of art judgments on the part of the pupils, and leading many to a deeper and more sincere study of art as it concerns their future vocations."

The work is carried on by means of class discussions, lectures, visits to art museums, and some drawing and designing. Its breadth is indicated by the list of subjects, which includes: "Community, Home, School, Office, Theatre, Dress, Color, Printing and Advertising Art, Graphic Arts, Architecture, Painting, Sculpture, and Art in Industry." Perhaps the main danger in such a course would be its unavoidable lack of thoroughness and its tendency to encourage a "know-it-all" attitude to which the adolescent pupil is all too prone.

Because of the comparative novelty of the high school art courses they have received much attention from educators during the past few years. Some of the objectives sought are well stated in the introduction to Baltimore's junior high school course:

“(1) The arousing and preserving of interest in Art through the cultivation of appreciation; (2) the enlarging and enriching of aesthetic experience through exercise of the imagination and of the creative impulse in design; (3) the furnishing of educational guidance and vocational information, distinguishing between appreciation, which applies to all pupils, and creation, which applies to few pupils; (4) the discovering of talent in gifted pupils; and (5) the furnishing of vocational training for talented pupils.”

In most high schools having art courses the tendency is toward practical application during the final two years. This usually implies a study of prevailing art trends—“the market,” to speak in commercial terms—which may throw light on vocational outlets for those who wish to specialize. Commercial design cannot help playing a large part in the motivation of the high school student who has an artistic bent but cannot afford many years of technical education after leaving school. Courses in appreciation, whether they involve actual practice or not, must none the less be the mainstay of the majority of high school students who study art.

The art education movement in the public schools resembles all such movements in that it first revealed itself either in school systems in the larger and wealthier cities or in communities where outstanding personalities happened to take it up. It is spreading outward from these focal points and there is no reason to doubt that before long its influence will be more widely felt. Its present status may be summed up in the words of C. Valentine Kirby, State Director of Art for Pennsylvania:<sup>19</sup> “Art education is no longer to be regarded as a special subject, a pigeonhole in the educational desk, a mere patch on the educational quilt, but rather a well-thought-out design woven into the educational fabric, enriching every phase of the school, home and community life. Through its purposeful and cooperative aims, art commands the attention and respect of the Superintendent and other school authorities, who to a large extent control its destiny.” These principles have found acceptance in New York, Los Angeles, Baltimore, Newark and elsewhere, and it is safe to say that they command the approval of educators generally.

Private schools often point the way for public schools. But though we find such institutions as the Lincoln School of New

<sup>19</sup> *The Virginia Teacher*, State Teachers' College, Harrisonburg, Virginia, July, 1929.

York City and Cranbrook, near Detroit, making notable experiments in pupil self-expression, and Andover distinguishing itself by its striking art collections, the arts in boys' private schools—and little more can be said for girls' schools—have been neglected. One reason for this neglect may be suggested. Private schools for boys are in large part geared to college entrance examinations, and their success or failure is likely to be measured by the marks their graduates attain in such examinations. The standardized subjects fit best into this situation. It has been far easier to know what the colleges expected of candidates for entrance in history or mathematics than in the arts, even in the increasing number of instances in which credit for art work in preparatory schools has been given. The systematization of art instruction in the colleges will doubtless have its effect upon the arts in the lower schools. So, too, will the "weaving" of art courses into "the educational fabric" of the public elementary schools.

As the high school or preparatory school student looks ahead he finds himself with a choice of several varieties of art education. One road leads to the colleges and universities, in which he may take art as a cultural subject, or as a step toward a professional career in some artistic specialty. The cultural course in art, as has been seen, has been widened in scope in recent years. The art lecture, usually illustrated with lantern slides, may still be found not only in the colleges but in some of the professional art schools. It is a convenient means of imparting a certain kind of information. But lecturing in the arts is under fire just as is mass lecturing of any kind in any school. If it is not likely to disappear it is probably destined to be supplemented more and more by other methods and to become of less importance relatively.

The newer methods may be divided into two general classes—the scholarly and the practical. Science may be brought to apply, as in the study of pigments at Harvard, or historical research, as at Princeton and to some extent at Oberlin and elsewhere. The practical courses consist, as the word implies, in giving the student an actual experience with the tools of the arts. Where the experiment has been tried not much more difficulty has been found in teaching the average student to copy a painting faithfully or to compose an original painting or drawing of his own than in teaching him higher mathematics or a foreign language. Creativeness cannot be taught, but technique can.

Such courses are frankly regarded as means of promoting "appreciation"—an overworked word with a penumbra of meaning not too easy to define. They are thought to give the student a feeling for the artist's problems that he could not derive from an objective study of existing works of art. At the same time they do afford the creatively gifted a chance to find themselves—though if the elementary and secondary schools have done their parts he should not have to wait until the college age to make this important discovery. The colleges and universities still do much in the field of the arts that they would not need to do were the lower schools more generally and effectively organized in this field.

But the use of art courses as part of a general cultural education offers far fewer problems than does the training of the professional artist. Here progress was impeded for a long time by two conflicting theories. One, which may be called the virtuoso theory, was that a sound foundation of technical skill could be acquired only by unremitting practice from childhood onward, leaving time for little more than the rudiments of a general cultural education. This theory, carried to the extreme, produced artists who were admirable technicians but who knew little about the world in which they lived. The other theory was that the artist, in order to express himself significantly, must have not only technique but such an acquaintance with the life of his time as would make him an integral part of it and a competent interpreter of it. But this meant that he must devote to general studies much time that his contemporary of more concentrated aims was using to perfect his technique.

In the nature of things there could be no perfect solution of this dilemma. It is one of those problems in which education has found itself increasingly involved with the expansion of knowledge and the multiplication of techniques. Some sacrifice, as in every such situation, had to be made. But certain factors were helping toward a reasonably satisfactory compromise. Prominent among these is, of course, the growth of art instruction in the elementary and secondary schools. It has been discovered that a degree of technical skill can be produced in children during the plastic years without interfering with their general education. A child may now arrive at the end of his high school course with about as much facility in drawing and painting as used to be attained in a year's course in an art school. Another factor is the discovery by



art school faculties that general culture is professionally valuable to their students, and by college and university faculties that general culture without practical application is likely to be tenuous and unsatisfactory.

These discoveries have resulted in the introduction of historical courses into art schools and of studio courses into colleges. They have also led in many instances to what seem to be mutually advantageous working agreements between art schools and the neighboring institutions of higher learning. It is possible that in due season the universities will absorb most of the art schools, just as they have absorbed most of the schools of medicine and law. In principle the cases are similar. In the three former instances the effect has been to lengthen the time required for a professional education, so that a course which a generation ago might have been completed in two years now requires from four to six years, or even more. No one questions that the quality of our doctors, engineers and lawyers has improved in consequence. Unless it is assumed that the artist is of a species mystically different from other men the same result might well follow the same cause in his case. Some artists, of course, do make precisely this assumption.

The schools of architecture afford a good illustration of the problems encountered when an attempt is made to graft the professional teaching of the arts into a university organization. The benefit sought is two-fold—an opportunity for the general student to take cultural courses in architecture, especially in its history and theory, and an opportunity for the architectural student to broaden his own educational background. Both of these conditions tend to draw the architectural school more closely into the life of the university.

“The old separate or exclusive character of the schools is being broken down,” state Bosworth and Jones,<sup>20</sup> “and with that change is coming a greater interest on the part of the schools in university problems. They are questioning and thinking of what their place is or should be in the university. Their own student body as compared to the total of the university is small, and their faculty is but a small proportion of the university faculty, yet they are beginning to try to exert such influence as they may toward moulding university policy. It is not to be understood that

<sup>20</sup> *Study of Architectural Schools*, above cited.

they have accomplished anything dramatic or significant, but the fact that they have begun to move rather than sit on the side lines and jeer is interesting. They are unconsciously becoming integral parts of the university scheme."

The longer the architectural department or school remains a part of the university the more marked this tendency is. Some readjustment is necessary on both sides. The scholarly preoccupation of the liberal arts group and the creative fervor of the architect must somehow be reconciled. The developments which make this possible also make possible the inclusion of professional courses in other arts than architecture within the university fold. The process of evolution seems normally to be that architecture is first separated from the engineering group with which it was originally associated, that it becomes a more or less independent part of the university, and that it then furnishes a center around which the other arts rally. The evolution of the College of Fine Arts at the Carnegie Institute in Pittsburgh is an excellent example. The Carnegie school was founded, as President Baker has said, "to train workers." But mechanical drawing had to be taught to engineering students; from this it was not a long step to architecture, and architecture eventually brought the other arts in its train.

There is a definite clash between the educational ideals of universities which still stick to rigid scholastic discipline and a bookkeeping system of marks and degrees, and those of architectural schools which have taken from the *École des Beaux Arts* in Paris the "project method" with its greater freedom and the greater responsibility which it throws upon the student. This lack of harmony is likely to lose importance and to disappear as the more conservative universities drop the policy of regimentation. That they will do so before long cannot be doubted if one surveys the spread of "honors courses" and such efforts toward freeing the student from time-keeping, enforced class attendance and petty grading systems as have recently been undertaken at the University of Chicago, and elsewhere.

Architecture is sometimes stretched to cover other subjects. Cornell's College of Architecture maintains courses in landscape architecture and also in painting and sculpture. The Harvard School of Architecture is linked with co-ordinate schools of Landscape Architecture and City Planning, and its dean is also a

professor of fine arts. Princeton's School of Architecture was nursed into existence in the Department of Art and Archeology, and is still interlocked with it. The fine arts departments at Florida, Alabama, George Washington and Pennsylvania are primarily architectural, though at the last named institution, at least, the policy has been formulated of teaching the fine arts with all the rigor and thoroughness of the architectural course. This is almost certain to be the outcome when fine arts courses are dominated by architects. Yale stands out as "an all-inclusive professional school of fine arts." Illinois reveals the tendency to divorce architecture from its old affiliation with engineering; here architecture has recently been taken out of the engineering group and made part of a new fine arts group including music and drama.

To quote again from Bosworth and Jones: "A number of these departments [in the engineering schools] have a certain fringe of courses in fine and applied art, and in many cases there seems to be a general tendency to regard them as embryonic fine arts groups, expected to branch off separately when strong enough. Engineering thus becomes an unsuspecting mother hen to alien ducklings, whose wayward struggles toward strange waters cause at times loud cacklings." Of course no mere reorganization can completely obscure the fact that architecture must depend upon engineering on the one hand and the fine arts on the other, since it is in itself a fine art dependent upon engineering for the realization of its projects. Perhaps its dominating position in America is due to this very fact. Every architectural design must possess the element of practicality. The very essence of the functionalism found in modern architecture is that a building shall outwardly express its uses. The architect is better able to appeal to "common sense" than the painter or sculptor.

It is important, at any rate, to bear in mind that in architectural education we first encounter, historically speaking, the disciplined teaching of the fine arts. It is highly probable that the teaching of architecture will profoundly affect the teaching of the fine arts in general. The subject is thus perhaps worth the somewhat extended treatment given it in the preceding pages.

The architectural school, in short, is probably the key to the future in the teaching of the fine arts in colleges and universities,

for its methods will influence the teaching of other fine arts subjects even though separate faculties are maintained. Something of the same thing may be said of independent art schools which maintain architectural departments. Independent art schools may be grouped according to the degree in which the element of "practicality" enters into their courses; that is to say, according to the degree in which they are schools of the "fine" or of the "applied" arts. To put the fact brutally, though without any intended disparagement either way, there are schools which try to prepare their students to earn a living and other schools which do not. Such institutions as the Pratt Institute, the Massachusetts School of Art, Carnegie Institute and the Pennsylvania Museum School operate with ultimate jobs in view, no matter how much their curriculums may differ in other respects. At the other extreme stands the Art Students' League of New York city, which was established as "a place where people could come and study," and which has stuck pretty closely to that conception.

The League has, as this is written, about 2,000 students. Most of these come from families of average means, some are poor and many pursue the study of art under a heavy financial handicap. Admission to certain classes is at the pleasure of the instructor, but otherwise the doors are open to all who can pay their share of the running expenses. An individual may remain in the school as long as he likes and take many courses or take the same course over and over. He may be a hopeless "duffer" or a talented semi-professional. The majority enter, it is stated, with the intention of finding a creative career in the fine arts. An informal estimate by an official of the school is that four-fifths of them fail in this ambition. Of these four-fifths, it is further estimated, perhaps ten percent become teachers, though not practitioners, of the fine arts; another ten percent follow commercial art, and the remainder do not put their studies to any use. The record is doubtless a good one if teaching and commercial art are considered, as they well may be, as adequate objectives; for the student who does not consider them as adequate objectives it is less satisfactory. Nor is either good teaching or first class commercial art likely to come from artists who believe that they demean themselves in practicing them.

Almost as much freedom as at the Art Students' League may be found at the Pennsylvania Academy, though this venerable—and venerated—institution is conducted by a board of trustees and not by the students themselves. "Life" and the "Antique" continue to play a large part here, as they do at the League, "the individuality of the student is not repressed by fixed methods," there is no compulsory attendance at classes, and in general the young artist is left to sink or swim according to the firmness of his will power, his native industry and his inherent gifts. At the School of the National Academy of Design, on the other hand, the entering pupil finds his work carefully prescribed and passes in due course from plaster heads and forms to "Antique in Full" and then to the life classes. "Continued work in the regular classes and attendance at the lectures given" is insisted upon. The "practical" is not stressed, though, as in nearly all art schools of whatever kind, students of sufficient proficiency often do commercial work to help pay their expenses. As very few of them can at once earn a living by "fine" art after graduation they are likely to continue, at least for a time, in the commercial field. No academy can insure a graduate against that necessity. The difference between the academy type of school and the "practical" schools of art is that the latter adapt their courses to the requirements of the marketplace, whereas the former do not. To hazard an opinion as to which is the better method would involve profound questions of pedagogy, aesthetics and perhaps even ethics. It is certain, however, that "practical" or "applied" art, by whomever produced, touches the public at more points and is quantitatively more important than "fine" art. But it is an open question whether or not a "fine" arts training is a better preparation, even for "practical" work, than a training directed more frankly at the practical job.

The "practical" schools are noticeably affected by the ideas and ideals of the business world. They are "efficient" and purposeful, and usually in close contact with their own graduates and with prospective employers. The needs of such employers naturally influence considerably the contents of the curriculum, the emphasis of the teaching is upon technique, and, though there are often general lectures of an inspirational nature, not much time is devoted to pure "culture." The student has not much time to give. Often his means are limited, in many cases he must support him-

self with the aid of outside paid employment, and nearly always he must begin earning as soon as possible. It is no condemnation of the schools in question to say that they are, for most of their students, short cuts to the arts. Lacking a patron of the old Renaissance pattern, who might permit him to develop his gifts at his ease, the budding painter or designer must perforce look to industry or commerce. But the theory of the "practical" schools is that the designing of fabrics or furniture, the making of illustrations for advertisers, even the styling of goods for department stores is worthy of the artist's attention.

This point ought, perhaps, to be emphasized. Just as the motion picture is practically the only form of dramatic art available to millions of Americans, so commercial and industrial creations are almost the only forms of the art of design to which they are exposed. Styles may be formed in the "fine" arts, but unless they are applied in the practical arts the general public is only vaguely aware of them. The commercial artist may be compared with the scientific popularizer. At his best he performs a necessary service of which no artist need be ashamed. He may, and sometimes does, pass from "applied" art to "fine" art, so that it may be that there is no necessary inconsistency between the qualities which make for success in the one field and in the other.

The practical schools tend to break with tradition in the interests of efficiency. They abbreviate the classical courses in "life" and the "antique," try various short cuts, and hold their students to regular hours and required courses. They attempt, as one school phrases it, to teach their beginners "to be as exact in dealing with color relations and color harmonies as is the performer on a violin in dealing with sound intervals." They train him "intensively for some particular field of work." They try to impart "initiative, tact, patience and a practical point of view toward the machine, mass production and merchandising." They invite and secure the cooperation of stores and factories. If a student takes up costume designing he is taught to consider costs as well as lines.

Interior decoration, pottery, wood-working, jewelry-making, metal-working, the printing arts, advertising design and illustration, and even "outdoor publicity"—in other words, the designing of billboards—occur prominently on the lists of courses even

though most of the students begin by drawing from the antique and from the human figure. Architecture is sometimes taught in the "practical" schools, though the tendency is to produce good draftsmen rather than architects. Professional mortality after graduation is perhaps less than among the graduates of the schools of the "fine" arts. Statistics on this point are hard to get, though one very practical art school estimated a few years ago that not more than one-third of its students would be practitioners of the arts ten years after receiving their diplomas.

The schools of music stand half way between the "practical" and the "fine." Music, despite the commercial uses of it over the radio, does not lend itself to commerce and industry quite so well as do design and painting. It cannot, moreover, be mastered by inspirational or happy-go-lucky methods. If the student is to be a virtuoso he must practice several hours a day. If he is to be a composer or a teacher he must master an art which is also a science.

The teaching of music has unquestionably improved greatly during recent years. The older and poorer types of music schools have tended to disappear and such institutions as the Eastman School of Music, the Juilliard School of Music and the Curtis School have assumed positions of leadership. At the last named institution emphasis is laid upon "the training and development of students of talent," instruction is offered by some of the country's best known musicians, and the merely mediocre are ruled out. At Rochester there is more opportunity for the average boy or girl, but an attempt is being made, by means of the Seashore "musical aptitude tests," to exclude those who are demonstrably unfitted for a musical career. The distinction between schools which are primarily for the exceptionally gifted and those which meet the needs of the larger number who pursue music as an avocation, for "cultural" ends, or as an honorable means of earning a living, must always be drawn, even though the boundary lines may overlap. As students of music are coming to realize that the surest means of livelihood is as a teacher, the academic institutions which can not only offer special preparation, but can grant degrees and certificates, are growing at the expense of the conservatories.

So far music remains a Cinderella among the arts in the colleges. In time the modernized professional schools of music may be expected not only to raise standards of musicianship but also to

raise the level of musical appreciation, and it may be that this development will react favorably upon the colleges.

No comment regarding American schools of the arts would be well rounded without a mention of one which is not in America—the American Academy in Rome. This institution, historically, derives from the cultural ideas of Charles Eliot Norton, as exemplified in the Archaeological Institute of America, which he founded in 1879, joined with latter-day conceptions of the value of professional graduate study in painting, sculpture, architecture and music. The students are chosen in competitions and sent to Italy with scholarship funds sufficient to meet their necessary expenses for three years. The Academy is purposeful and its requirements are explicit. It puts much emphasis upon tradition, which each student must master in his own field to the best of his ability; and it lays down rules for creative work to be produced in the final year of the course of study. It encourages and requires team work, in the form of projects to be carried out jointly by sculptors, architects, landscape architects and painters. The Academy looks to its students to “contribute to the civilization of their country.” Although the Academy under its present organization is still in its first quarter-century, many of its graduates have already attained distinction.

Having glanced at the extent to which art is taught in the United States, an inquirer's logical next step might be to try to determine how well it is taught and whether the quality of the teaching is improving or falling off. Such questions can never be easy to answer. No one familiar with the situation denies that from the elementary grades upward there has been improvement in the technique of art teaching. At the same time there is little agreement among educators as to what the next steps ought to be.

“We find ourselves,” declares Eugene Savage, “less certain than ever as to exactly what aims art education ought to have and exactly what methods it ought to use to attain those ends. Some would leave the schools as they are. Some would turn them into shops. Some would have more discipline, some less. Some would eliminate the faculty and others would get rid of the whole problem by eliminating the students.” Mr. Savage traces this confusion to “the clutter of separatism, incidentalism and genre” which he



finds in the modern world of art. For him the way of progress lies in a development of the "workshop system," whose "basic principle is the very simple one that the way to proficiency in art is to perform."

Director Leon L. Winslow of the art department of the Baltimore public schools holds that "from the beginning to the end of the school course the art period should be one of continuous self-expression and of consistent self-realization, of aspiration and of dreams, of experiment with a diversity of materials and of experience with beautiful things, of recreation and of productive work done in the spirit of play, of freedom of thought and of opinion, of mental and spiritual growth."<sup>21</sup>

Few educators would quarrel with either Mr. Savage's or Mr. Winslow's prescription. But the uncertainty as to aims which Mr. Savage describes still remains. The demand for art education has outgrown the educational apparatus which is expected to provide it.

<sup>21</sup> "Constructing a Course of Study in Art," *Education*, March, 1932, pp. 396-400

## CHAPTER VI

### ART EDUCATION OUTSIDE THE SCHOOLS

**F**ORMAL education in the schools and colleges is plainly a large part of art training in the United States. It is the most important part if we assume that the hen must come before the egg, and that both the artist and his public can function better if they have had some formal training, respectively, in producing and understanding art. But organized education does not by any means give the complete picture of the conscious attempt to open the eyes of the American people to the significance of the arts. To round out that picture it is necessary to take into consideration the museums, which are in themselves educational institutions, and which, as has been seen, cooperate on a large scale with the schools; the libraries, the art exhibitions, which are old stories in the largest cities but which of late are being taken on tour, concerts, and to some extent public lectures. The fact that adults can be educated at all is almost a discovery of yesterday, but it is one that has been seized upon by enthusiasts for the arts.

Let us begin by seeing what the museums have done and are doing. It may not be strictly true that these institutions were ever mere depositories for dead objects, guarded by curators from profanation by the public. It may be that they only seemed that way to the public. Many of them, the records show, were actively used, by those for whom they were intended—selected groups of students or members of the proprietorial societies. But the idea that the public is more important than the exhibits is certainly new, and it is this idea that distinguishes the museum of the present day from that of half a century or more ago. H. P. Kent of the Metropolitan Museum of Art is more responsible for the change than any other one person. Our great contemporary museums, especially those specializing in the arts, now deserve to be ranked with our schools and colleges as institutions of learning. At the same time they are making a connection with industry and commerce which is of growing importance.

Though the first museum in America, that of "the Charleston Library Society," of Charleston, South Carolina, was founded three years before the Declaration of Independence, art museums did not begin to figure prominently until about a century later. Private collections, including numerous portraits, of course existed before the Revolution. Charles Willson Peale, who was a taxidermist and naturalist as well as a painter, set up a museum in Philadelphia not long after the new nation won its independence. "The paintings in his museum," says Miss La Follette,<sup>22</sup> "consisted principally of portraits of prominent men, from his own hand or that of his son Rembrandt; and these were hung, amusingly enough, in the same room with the stuffed birds and beasts, forming a sort of frieze above the three tiers of cases. The museum, minus the flora and fauna, is now in large part preserved in Independence Hall."

John Trumbull's collection of Revolutionary paintings was bought by Yale College in 1831, in consideration of a life annuity of \$1,000. In 1864 Yale bought the James Jackson Jarves collection of Italian primitives. The Pennsylvania Academy and the National Academy showed pictures, and artists occasionally exhibited for an admission fee; Rembrandt Peale boasted of having made \$8,866 from showing his "Court of Death." In 1828 the Chatham Gallery in New York City had among its "neat collection of curiosities" a "gallery of paintings and engravings." Waxwork museums existed in the cities early in the century, though it may be doubted that they contained much that would now be called art.

Prudery had much to do with holding back the exhibitions of paintings and sculptures. John Vanderlyn, in the early 1800's, copied Correggio's "Antiope" for a patron. Says Miss La Follette: "When Vanderlyn, after his return from Europe, was exhibiting this picture and his 'Ariadne' with others in two rooms of the buildings occupied by the American Academy, the keeper demanded their removal, saying that the parents of his pupils would not allow them to come for study to a room adjoining one in which indecent pictures were exposed." And Mrs. Trollope, in 1831, noted that the Pennsylvania Academy refused to admit men and women at the same time to the gallery in which were the casts

<sup>22</sup> *Art in America*, *op. cit.*

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from the antique—some of them, supposedly, insufficiently clad. But the self-elected defenders of American purity lost ground and in time people came to distinguish some difference between nudity and lewdness. The art museums then had a fair chance to flourish, though conservatism and prudishness hampered them for a long time—in some cases down to the present day.

Paul Marshall Rea, consultant to the advisory group on museum education of the Carnegie Corporation, lists the early art museums in the following order:

1858 Walters Gallery of Art	Baltimore, Md.
1862 Albright Art Gallery	Buffalo, N. Y.
1869 Corcoran Gallery of Art	Washington, D. C.
Metropolitan Museum of Art	New York City.
1870 Museum of Fine Arts	Boston, Mass.
1875 Walker Galleries	Minneapolis, Minn.
1876 Pennsylvania Museum of Art	Philadelphia.
1877 Rhode Island School of Design	Providence, R. I.
1879 Art Institute of Chicago	Chicago, Ill.
City Art Museum	St. Louis, Mo.
1881 Cincinnati Museum Association	Cincinnati, Ohio.
1883 Minneapolis Institute of Arts	Minneapolis, Minn.
1885 Detroit Institute of Arts	Detroit, Mich.
1888 Layton Art Gallery	Milwaukee, Wis.
1889 City Library Association, Art Museum	Springfield, Mass.
1892 Leland Stanford Museum of Fine Arts	Stanford University, Calif.
1894 Kansas City Art Institute	Kansas City, Mo.
1895 Carnegie Institute, Fine Arts	Pittsburgh, Pa.
John Herron Art Institute	Indianapolis, Ind.
Nelson Art Gallery	Kansas City, Mo.
Portland Art Association	Portland, Ore.
Worcester Art Museum	Worcester, Mass.
1900 Museum of Fine Arts	Houston, Texas.

The actual number of public museums of all kinds in the United States increased from 445 in 1921 to 781 in 1930, although difficulties of classification make the figures misleading. Estimates of capital investment have more significance. During the twenty years between 1910 and 1930 the capital invested in art museums alone rose from \$15,000,000 to \$58,000,000, Mr. Rea estimates. The investment in art museum buildings alone, as estimated by Laurence Vail Coleman, Director of the American Association of Museums, increased from a total of \$20,127,000 in 1920 to \$51,969,000 at the end of 1930. Table 14, prepared by Mr. Coleman, shows the relation between the new investments in art museums and in other museums, in buildings only, from 1921 to 1930 inclusive.

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During the decade 1921-1930, 236 new museums were founded, of which 60 were art museums, making a total of 167 art museums at the end of the decade. Of these newly founded museums 37 erected new buildings at a total cost of \$25,578,000, and of the 37 buildings 13, at a total cost of \$16,860,000, were erected for art museums.<sup>23</sup> At the end of the decade the art museums were leading, not only in rate of growth but, as shown in Table 14, in investment

TABLE 14.—INVESTMENT, BY YEARS, IN PUBLIC MUSEUM BUILDINGS IN USE AT THE END OF 1930\*

Year of opening	Cost of buildings by field					
	Art	Science	History	Industry	General	Total
1930.....	\$ 2,600,000	\$ 1,112,000	\$2,240,000	\$ 320,000	\$ 335,000	\$ 6,607,000
1929.....	2,439,000	2,029,000	830,000	5,000,000	2,519,000	12,817,000
1928.....	18,895,000	120,000	22,000	.....	30,000	14,067,000
1927.....	5,710,000	35,000	200,000	.....	8,000	5,953,000
1926.....	2,460,000	72,000	182,000	.....	2,188,000	4,902,000
1925.....	750,000	.....	.....	.....	.....	750,000
1924.....	2,688,000	.....	15,000	.....	591,000	3,294,000
1923.....	1,125,000	692,000	.....	.....	400,000	2,217,000
1922.....	.....	50,000	.....	.....	.....	50,000
1921.....	175,000	8,530,000	.....	.....	165,000	8,870,000
Total for decade....	31,842,000	12,640,000	3,489,000	5,320,000	6,236,000	59,527,000
Prior to 1921.....	20,127,000	9,522,000	3,946,000	1,150,000	8,909,000	43,654,000
Grand total.....	51,969,000	22,162,000	7,435,000	6,470,000	15,145,000	103,181,000

\* From U.S. Office of Education, *Biennial Survey of Education in the United States, 1928-1930*. Bulletin, 1931, No. 20, Chapter XXII, "Recent Progress and Condition of Museums," by Laurence Coleman. Blanks indicate no reported new investments. The figures given for the period prior to 1921 cover all museum investments, for buildings only, as estimated, from colonial times to that date.

in buildings. They also led in annual incomes, with a total of \$7,394,000, as compared with \$4,796,000 for scientific museums, \$919,000 for museums of history, \$632,000 for industrial museums and \$2,590,000 for general museums.<sup>24</sup> Both the investments and the incomes of art museums are concentrated to a large extent in perhaps fourteen of the larger institutions. Some of these now exceed the most important foreign museums in attendance. The

<sup>23</sup> Totals are unavoidably a little misleading in this field. Of the \$16,860,000 for new art museums \$13,850,000 was spent for the new building of the Philadelphia Museum of Art. This museum is listed as new because it was originally undertaken for the city of Philadelphia, though later taken over by the Pennsylvania Museum of Art.

<sup>24</sup> Coleman, *op. cit.*

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Metropolitan Museum has more visitors in a year than the National Gallery in London or the Louvre in Paris.

Table 15, showing attendance records at nineteen important museums of art, illustrates some of the characteristics of trends since 1924. The figures may not be exactly comparable, since some

TABLE 15.—ATTENDANCE AT 19 AMERICAN MUSEUMS OF ART, 1924, 1926, 1928, 1929, 1930<sup>a</sup>

	1924	1926	1928	1929	1930
Fine Arts Gallery, San Diego, Calif.....	.....	140,727	125,059	138,895	120,911
Pasadena Art Institute.....	.....	18,000	20,000	20,000	25,000
Corcoran Gallery, Washington, D. C.....	117,240	160,602	190,914	157,900	159,959
Freer Gallery, Washington, D. C.....	98,362	109,481	111,173	123,696	115,406
Art Institute, Chicago.....	884,150	831,186	810,815	1,006,122	916,816
Herron Art Institute, Indianapolis.....	39,720	46,770	42,799	43,477	
Delgado Museum of Art, New Orleans.....	25,425	30,713	25,804	24,254	30,258
Museum of Art, Baltimore.....	32,832	30,672	27,077	131,835	126,737
Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.....	406,427	417,098	335,808	394,091	379,044
Worcester (Mass.) Art Museum.....	43,000	37,000	43,000	47,412	47,816
Detroit Art Institute.....	118,057	121,792	445,158	315,221	429,010
Minneapolis Institute of Arts.....	88,549	109,760	117,184	107,270	96,258
City Art Museum, St. Louis.....	290,229	254,021	329,394	299,556	319,354
Newark Museum.....	27,520	118,532	114,967	109,920	119,663
Metropolitan Museum, New York.....	1,062,901	1,228,391	1,218,834	1,339,754	1,288,828
Museum of Art, Cleveland.....	302,689	282,263	311,704	315,416	303,815
Museum of Art, Toledo.....	99,772	147,892	179,915	185,413	215,456
Pennsylvania Academy, Philadelphia.....	114,469	86,080	.....	65,672	70,080
Pennsylvania Museum of Art, Philadelphia.....	.....	.....	958,851	851,912	536,406

<sup>a</sup> Figures for 1924, 1926 and 1928 condensed from *Attendance at Museums in the United States and Canada*, Publications of the American Association of Museums, New Series, Number 9, Washington, 1930. Figures for 1929 and 1930 from *Handbook of American Museums*, The American Association of Museums, Washington, 1932.

museums record their attendance by turnstile counting, some by hand counting and some on the basis of estimates; and the same museum may change from one system to another. If a museum attendance figure ends in three ciphers, as is the case with the Pasadena Art Institute throughout the represented period and with the Worcester Art Museum for three of the years cited, it is presumably an estimate. Various other factors make one hesitate to draw general conclusions. The public likes novelty, grows tired of exhibits it has seen too often, and responds readily to an adequately publicized new feature. A new building will always send attendance up for a time. The new Detroit museum was opened in November, 1927. The attendance rose from 121,792

in 1926, the last full year spent in the old building, to 445,158 in 1928, the first full year in the new. It dropped to 315,221 in 1929, when the novelty had perhaps worn off, then climbed to 429,010 in 1930. Toledo dropped during 1925 (not shown in the table), when construction work was being done, then nearly doubled its 1924 attendance in 1928, following the opening of the new wing. In 1929 and 1930 it held and increased this gain. Nearly a million persons visited the new Philadelphia museum in 1928 and only 536,406 in 1930. In the latter year, however, 282,532 persons visited the Rodin Museum, a branch of the Philadelphia museum whose figures are not included in the totals given, which was opened to the public in 1929.

Special exhibits of a temporary nature will send attendance up, as will longer hours or additional open evenings. The Metropolitan Museum hovered between 500,000 and 600,000 from 1893 to 1901, inclusive, rose to 937,883 in 1909, the year of the Hudson-Fulton celebration, fell to 635,497 in the war year of 1918, passed the million mark in 1921 and the million and a quarter mark in 1926, dropped a little in 1928, went up in 1929 and went down in 1930. It seems clear that museum attendance does not increase automatically with the population; and that the rate of increase, or of occasional decrease, varies from time to time and from place to place. Of the fifteen museums whose attendance records for both 1924 and 1930 are shown in the table, two, the Boston Museum of Fine Arts and the Pennsylvania Academy, lost ground; three, the Baltimore Museum of Art, the Toledo Museum of Art and the Newark Museum, gained conspicuously; the remaining ten made slight or moderate progress.

Fluctuations due to local conditions may be ironed out to some extent by adding the totals for the fifteen museums for 1924 and 1930. For 1924 the combined attendance of these museums was 3,620,811; for 1930 it was 4,595,495—a gain of a little over 27 percent. The ratio of attendance to community population fluctuates so widely as one moves about the country as to indicate that increase or decrease is more dependent upon local and specific than upon general conditions. For example, nine of the eighteen museums whose records are shown for 1929 and 1930 gained in attendance in the latter year, which was one of depression, while the other nine lost.

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Toledo's attendance in 1928 was equal to about two-thirds of the city's population; the Chicago Art Institute's to about one-fourth; the Cleveland Museum's to about one third; the Metropolitan's to between one-fifth and one-sixth. In the United States as a whole about 31,000,000 people live within reach of some kind of museum, and the total attendance at all museums is 21,000,000 a year, or 68 percent of the total population of the cities having museums. If attendance is proportionate to income the art museums may have a total annual attendance of about 9,460,000 or 30 percent of the population of cities having such museums. Though a rough estimate, this figure accords well enough with the average of tabulated proportions to be allowed to stand.

Museums in general, as well as art museums, gained in attendance between 1910 and 1930, with much of this gain occurring in the second ten years. But whereas museums specializing in subjects other than art gained 77 percent, the art museums gained only 23 percent.<sup>25</sup> Mr. Rea concludes on this showing that "if it be true that there is now a wider interest in art than formerly, it appears not to have centered about the art museums." But attendance figures, though important, conceal the factor that must always be taken into account in considering the arts. They do not tell what the millions who went into art museums in any given year saw or did inside. Today's totals may mean more or less than those of ten or twenty years ago. Mr. Rea defines the functions of museums as "first, to secure so large an attendance that they will make themselves a major social force; second, to elevate public appreciation of aesthetic and intellectual values so that they may become a great educational force; and, third, to foster scholarship both in their staffs and in the portion of the public having capacity for scholarship, to the end that they may become institutions for the advancement as well as the diffusion of learning." The great museums of the present day in America subscribe without exception to these ideals. Mr. Rea makes the significant point that there is a great similarity between the museum and the library, and that the museum is now going through the same stages of evolution which have already made the library so important a factor in American life.

<sup>25</sup> From a report of Paul Marshall Rea to the Carnegie Corporation, 1931.



"In twenty-five years," says the 1931 report of the American Association of Museums, "museums have transformed themselves in equipment and collections. Their educational work has developed from beginnings in a few places to well organized activities in thousands of institutions. The erstwhile isolation of museum workers has broken down throughout the country, and the several museum movements in different parts of the world have come into close relationship." This is said of all kinds of museums, but it applies to the art museum as well as to any other. The objective nowadays is to "put the museum to work." There is no slackening of emphasis upon the collection and preservation of works of art for their own sake, and with a view to the needs and interests of the coming generations. But it has been recognized that a museum which does not serve the present generation is unlikely to serve any generation.

The growing points of American art museums are their educational activities, their attempts to link the past with the present by systematic historical collections, their increasing hospitality to modern art, both "fine" and applied," and their ever strengthening alliance with industry and commerce. These policies have not led to diminished interest in the classical collections and in archaeology; rather have they lent point and purpose to them. The modern art museum, as in Denver and Santa Fe, has given attention to the collection of American Indian material; it has preserved Colonial art, as in the American Wing of the Metropolitan and the "Colonial Chain" of old houses in Fairmount Park, Philadelphia, under the care of the Pennsylvania Museum of Art; a number of specialized foreign collections have been assembled, such as that of the Freer Gallery in oriental art; the Carnegie Institute in Pittsburgh has its International Exhibition; and special collections of modern art are shown not only in some of the general art museums but in such institutions as the Museum of Modern Art, founded in New York in 1929, with an operating income of \$100,000 annually; the Whitney Museum of American Art, in New York, opened in the fall of 1931; and the Phillips Memorial Art Gallery, in Washington, incorporated in 1920.

The Metropolitan Museum in New York City long ago took the lead in educational work and in industrial contacts, though it now has a number of friendly rivals in these fields. During 1931, 23,357

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persons worked in its galleries; 91,600 persons received instruction from museum teachers or from class teachers who accompanied them; 37,866 attended special courses or lectures; 78,440 attended the courses for children, and 73,969 attended the eight museum concerts. These figures are all for the main museum building. Special exhibitions for which a separate attendance record was kept drew 205,344 visitors. In the extension service lantern slides, prints, paintings, cinema films, photographs, textiles and other objects to a total number of 126,375 were loaned. Most of these totals show a decline since 1930, although the attendance at special courses and lectures and at the museum concerts increased considerably. The depression was also responsible, as the trustees' report states, for a drop in the dues-paying membership from 13,251 to 11,145. Whether this loss will be more than temporary depends, of course, on economic trends beyond the control of any museum.

During 1931 the Museum gave gallery talks, study-hours and illustrated lectures which were free to the public. During the season of 1931-1932 six courses were given, for teachers and others, for some or all of which credit was allowed by Columbia University, New York University, the College of the City of New York and the Board of Education of New York city. In 1931, 76 radio talks on the collections were broadcast over three radio stations. There were story hours for children of different ages and a special story hour for physically handicapped children.

Services to industrial designers were as far as possible kept up to the scale of more prosperous years.<sup>26</sup> As the 1931 report states: "Our Museum activities in the field of industrial arts during the year past have been keyed into this situation in the effort to encourage among manufacturers and designers [a] revision upward of their attitude toward design, to anticipate the higher buying level to which a business revival will certainly aspire."

The report continues, in speaking of the museum's exhibitions of American industrial art, of which the twelfth was held in the fall of 1931: "In themselves these exhibitions have been a commentary on the progress of both designer and manufacturer, as well as on the less definable trends of design itself. We began with

<sup>26</sup> Richard F. Bach, director of the Department of Industrial Relations, has been largely instrumental in building up these services.

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exhibitions of objects based entirely on museum study, later limited the entries to objects designed and made in the United States by permanent residents in our country, and finally offered to designers a test of talent in the memorable display of the eleventh exhibition, which consisted of pieces specially designed and made for the occasion and, therefore, not available in stock in the shops . . .

"In its twelfth exhibition of American industrial art, the Museum again reverted to its earlier method and offered again a cross section of current production, to the total exclusion of all counterfeits of historic forms . . . This exhibition of 1931 was a practical demonstration in forthright use of material, in complete assurance of technical resource, in the fair and reliant use of the machine without disparagement of the hand, in the decent and reasonable approach to new aspects of design. Firms and individuals participating numbered 240 for 524 objects shown; attendance for the 41 days' showing totaled a few less than 34,000. A selection of pieces from this exhibition has been taken over by the American Federation of Arts as a travelling collection to be shown in other museums."

By such methods as these the Metropolitan is building up a constituency which does much more than walk through the galleries until it succumbs to "museum fatigue." Children who have attended the classes and lectures are expected to be more than casual sightseers in the galleries when they grow up, and thousands of adults have learned to look to the Museum not only for its permanent collections but for special events brought about to interest them.

Museums naturally differ according to the character of the communities they serve, the funds at their disposal, including the amount available from governmental sources, their history and organization, and the personalities that have influenced them. In Chicago the Art Institute includes not only a museum but a school and a theatre, and its policy for many years has been to stress its educational services, even at the expense of new acquisitions to its collections. As a museum it has been able to refer the professional art student to its school and confine its general educational work to the amateur. As Table 15 has shown, it actually lost in attendance between 1924 and 1928, though it showed a gain of some thousands between 1924 and 1930. In

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endowment it took a huge jump, between 1920 and 1929, from \$2,686,419 to \$7,552,387. In gallery floor space there was an increase from 325,275 square feet to 422,395 square feet. Several new collections were added. The Oriental collections more than doubled, the print collections grew from 4,000 to 15,000 prints, and the decorative arts department grew from one room to sixteen—all after 1920.

Memberships, which are a fair test of a steady public interest, rose from 12,609 in 1920 to 19,017 in 1929. Lectures for which either an entrance fee or a membership card were required drew 27,078 persons in 1920 and 59,573 in 1929. The number of children from public and private schools visiting the museum under guidance of instructors was 3,874 in 1920 and 16,352 in 1929. Special lectures for children, some delivered at the Institute and some in the public schools, were first provided for in 1925, and in 1929 were attended by 67,569 children, so that, in 1929, 80,047 more children attended either lectures or gallery talks than had been the case in 1920. Special art classes for children, held in the Art Institute school on Saturdays, doubled their attendance during the period. The Lantern Slide Department, which sends out circulating collections, lent material to 604 colleges and schools in 1921 and 1,332 in 1929; to 127 business firms in 1921 and 158 in 1929; issued 69,978 items in 1921 and 88,331 in 1929; and reached 25 states in 1921 and 31 in 1929. The extent and growth of these activities, though by no means phenomenal, speak for themselves. They go far to outweigh the slowness in the increase in gross attendance.

At the Carnegie Museum in Pittsburgh, which is near neighbor to the Carnegie Institute's College of Fine Arts, Director Homer Saint-Gaudens announced his purpose some years ago as "to make mankind, from wage earner to millionaire, realize the natural pleasure to be gained from attractiveness in its man-made surroundings; to disseminate the appreciation of art in its broadest sense among all classes of people; to keep in this, their own city, those who have means or taste beyond the ordinary; to draw from afar others who will come to live and work among what should be known as pleasing and fortunate surroundings."

This was, certainly, a large order for a city which is primarily industrial and which has given but little collective attention

to the aesthetic. Nevertheless there has been appreciable progress toward its realization. School children regularly visit the Museum, though perhaps the work among them is not as intensively organized as in a number of other cities. There is a notable attempt to get all classes of people, not excluding manual laborers, to come; and a visit to the Museum, even during that part of the year when the famous International Exhibition is not being held, shows that this attempt is increasingly successful.

The Cleveland Museum of Art, though its increase in total attendance has not been spectacular during the past few years, has woven itself into the life of its community in a systematic manner, allying itself with the public schools, the art schools, the library and the civic organizations. The present Museum was not opened until 1916, and therefore its growth belongs largely in the decade from 1920 to 1930 which is chiefly considered in this chapter. Advertising and publicity have been largely and frankly used. Much emphasis has been laid upon work with children, and a Children's Museum is part of the larger institution. Children's classes, under the direction of public school teachers, museum instructors or others, are numerous and well attended, and there is supervised drawing for those who do not belong to any class. A special class for unusually gifted children, conducted by a selected teacher, has aroused much interest. Lectures and gallery talks are given for the general public and for students from the city's high schools and colleges, and extension exhibits are sent out to schools and libraries. A good deal of emphasis is laid upon modern art, and an effort is being made to build up a collection of the work of Ohio artists. A separately endowed Department of Musical Arts gives organ recitals, concerts and lectures, and holds classes in folk dancing and appreciation of music for members' children.

The Detroit Institute of Art was obliged to curtail its expenditures drastically during the fiscal year beginning July 1, 1932, but not so drastically as some earlier reports indicated. This institution depends for more than half of its budget on city appropriations, and its charter forbids it to charge an admission fee. Early in 1932 Mayor Frank Murphy vetoed the action of the Common Council in trimming the appropriation below a sum which he considered adequate, and an additional allowance was made,

which, with private funds, "made provision for an essential scholarship staff and will keep up the educational services of the museum, such as lectures, musicales and special exhibitions."<sup>27</sup>

The Detroit Institute, in its present building, opened late in 1927, is in many ways an excellent example of museum progress during the 1920-1930 decade. Natural lighting, "an attempt to create an harmonious architectural setting for the objects displayed," and "period rooms" in orderly arrangement are the outstanding features of this relatively new structure. In the latter instance Detroit obviously took a leaf from the popular American Wing of the Metropolitan Museum. Many of the period rooms are copies of original rooms appropriate to the purpose, and everything is made as clear as possible for the untutored persons who form the vast majority of museum visitors. There is close cooperation with the schools, both in the Institute itself and in lectures given in the school auditoriums. A Children's Museum is maintained, and from it suitable collections are circulated among the schools. Concerts are given, lectures are delivered, an auditorium is available for gatherings in harmony with museum purposes, and an effort is made to render the Institute "a community house where all activities with an aesthetic impulse will find encouragement." Wealthy men of affairs, including Edsel Ford, have served on the Art Commission—Mr. Ford as President—and have given conspicuously of their time and energy in its service.

The Toledo Museum of Art is largely the product of the generosity and enthusiasm of a few individuals, notably Edward Drummond Libbey, who endowed it and who watched over its growth with more aesthetic discrimination than many wealthy patrons of the arts can be credited with, and the late George W. Stevens, its first director. When the Museum was opened in 1903, in hired rooms in a downtown building, says Blake-More Godwin, the present director, "the balance sheet showed assets of \$293, covering reflectors for pictures, a battered desk and a well-worn rug." By 1926, when the first addition to the present Museum was opened, the total assets of all kinds had grown to more than \$4,000,000. The erection of two further additions was begun in 1930 with a bequest of \$1,000,000 from Mr. Libbey's estate, and in 1931 the book value of all assets had increased to \$5,616,000,

<sup>27</sup> Clyde Burroughs, Secretary, quoted in *The Art Digest*, May 15, 1932, p. 5.

of which \$3,844,000 represented permanent collections of works of art, appraised at original cost.

Director Stevens gave special attention to work with children, and the Toledo Museum is said to have been the first in the world to allow them to visit the galleries unaccompanied by adults. Free courses are given for residents of Toledo in a School of Design which is part of the institution. Special classes are held for gifted children, and adult classes have included business men, school teachers, students looking toward professional art work and members of the general public who wish to strengthen their appreciation of the arts by systematic instruction. Director Stevens laid down the principle that "it is the function of a modern Museum of Art not only to call the attention of the human race to those elemental truths which have smoldered in our treasure galleries or in the ruins of early civilizations, but also to take the lead in the educational revolution which is to restore and re-develop this important and vital heritage of man." The Museum has held steadily to his objective, and, as was seen in Table 15, has at the same time had a steady growth in total attendance.

The Pennsylvania Museum of Art is another illustration of the modern idea in museums. Lectures and gallery talks are given, a desk is maintained to give information about the exhibits, two School Attachés "have been studying to adapt the Museum work to the school needs, encouraging more personal observation on the part of the children and relating it to the school studies," there have been weekly classes for gifted boys and girls from the high schools, and a staff psychologist has been appointed to carry on experiments "to determine the effect of varying conditions of installation and labelling." An experimental branch museum,<sup>28</sup> opened in May, 1931, gave within the first weeks of its existence an exhibit of masters of American painting from the main Museum, an exhibit of art work done in the Delaware County public schools, and one of "treatments of the horse in various periods of art." In a little over three weeks it drew a total attendance of 15,686, and between May 8 and December 31, 1931, an attendance of 160,628. The educational activities, perhaps more significant than total attendance, for the parent museum, were participated

<sup>28</sup> This experiment was made possible by a grant of \$45,000 from the Carnegie Corporation and a gift of \$30,000 from John R. McClatchy. It was planned to operate it for a period of five years from the date of its establishment.

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in, during the year ending May 31, 1931, by 38,443 individuals, of whom 12,399 were members of school classes. This, of course, was exclusive of the work done by the Museum School, which has been mentioned in a preceding chapter. Like the Detroit Institute and other museums the Pennsylvania Museum has suffered a serious curtailment of income, with what ultimate results cannot be at present determined.

The museums which have been briefly described in the preceding pages are by no means a complete list of even the outstanding American institutions of their kind. They have been considered mainly for the purpose of pointing out contemporary tendencies in museum work. That these tendencies are toward making the museum an influential educational institution, comparable with the schools and colleges, and ordinarily allied with them, is fairly well indicated. The ideas now held as to the scope of museum work are suggested by a statement of the curator of the new Los Angeles County Museum, Mr. H. M. Kurtzworth, who says: "The situation calls for a definite plan to meet the art needs of Los Angeles, not only as the expression of a most active creative community but in leading the way for a wider use of the arts in American life. The museum is the art clearing house for the other cities of the county, and it must help these cities to become centers of art, and in themselves to be museums of architecture, gardening, mural painting, sculpture, and all the decorative arts and industries which enrich life. The art collections of the museum are therefore being assembled on a plan of practical inspirational value, rather than on the 'art for art's sake' formula of yesterday. This means that the collections will cover the whole field of man's significant art activity . . . There are many groups and many talented people here in all the arts; enough wealth, too. All that is needed is some co-ordinating influence. The museum should provide this."<sup>29</sup>

The Los Angeles institution is to be supported out of county funds, which will provide for running expenses and overhead, leaving the increase of collections largely to private givers. The emphasis is upon education on a community-wide basis. When the American art museum first emerged from its respectable semi-obscurity a few decades ago its efforts were toward making its collections available to the public. The emphasis was still upon

<sup>29</sup> Quoted in *The Art Digest*, August 1, 1931, p. 6.



the collections. The public was in effect urged to adapt itself to the museum. Now the museum seems to be adapting itself to the public. More and more the contents of the museum are being judged less by their intrinsic value than by their educational importance.

Dr. Robert B. Harshe, director of the Art Institute of Chicago, has well summed up what he considers to be the ideal place of the museum in the art life of the country.<sup>30</sup> "American artists create today," he states, "with the assurance that their product will meet with greater sympathy and understanding. For this attitude of growing tolerance on the part of the public the museums are, in large part, responsible. More and more they are taking over the function of the Community Center plus that of the University, and, added to these, of the Cathedral. They are dynamic, for they are dealing with the artifacts of the living, and they are fluid, for they know that while art alone endures, yet it changes constantly."

For a final comment on American museums and the general movement of which they are a part it will be helpful to consider the viewpoint of a European authority who is thoroughly familiar with conditions both in this country and abroad, Mr. René d'Harnoncourt.<sup>31</sup> "The public in the United States," says Mr. d'Harnoncourt, "has proved to be very responsive and the steady increase of organizations connected with art education, the increase of visitors in museums and exhibitions, prove that the movement at the present time is rapidly growing. Women's clubs and educational units contribute most to these activities. The efforts of both the providing and receiving groups result in a steadily increasing number of exhibitions, lectures and other educational work. We have to admit that in many cases other motives, like social ambition (for it is smart to know all about art) help the cause along, but even so we cannot get away from the fact that a genuine need for education in the field of art exists, and that it is taken seriously by the majority of people involved in the movement.

"I believe that the average European museum or art exhibit cannot compare in attendance with the average American institution, but I believe, on the other hand, that the European visitor in most cases will benefit more from his visit. The attitude of the

<sup>30</sup> See his article, "The Museum and the American Art Renaissance," in *Creative Art*, November, 1931, pp. 381-386.

<sup>31</sup> In an informal report to Frederick P. Keppel.

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majority of visitors in the States who come to 'get the facts on art' makes them miss the essential values of the museum, the aesthetic enjoyment and enrichment. It has been my experience that the vast majority of visitors to an exhibition, in their eagerness to learn accidental details, like origin, age and technical details of the work of art, neglect to find time for aesthetic appreciation. To give the public the real benefit of collections and lectures it seems to me of utmost importance to help them to get first a way of approach. Practically all the efforts in art education that I have come in touch with concentrate on acquainting the public with facts and data connected with the work, but very little time is spent in trying to help the people to appreciate the essential value of the work itself.

"The worst about this method is that the visitor, having learned a few technical facts about the objects, feels sure that he knows now all there is to know about the work of art, loses his interest in acquiring more and begins to pass judgment on artistic creations according to accidental facts, like age, origin and material. This attitude of placing more importance on accidental qualities than on the essential aesthetic ones will be found applied later in the visitor's everyday life. He will buy objects because they are old or from a certain country or by a certain master, and not because they are beautiful or appropriate for the purpose. This misinterpretation of art values seems to me the main source of the false tea-room aesthetic that is growing so rapidly."

In an accompanying outline Mr. d'Harnoncourt mentions a number of methods by which he believes American museums of art might improve their effectiveness. The outline is as follows:

1. Organization of museums according to type of work that they are supposed to do in the community.

- (a) Collection, preservation and display of valuable examples of artistic creations for the scholar and connoisseur and the educator (only for big cities).

- (b) Establishment of a center of artistic culture for the benefit of the community, with special emphasis on application of art and aesthetics in everyday life and industry and leisure.

2. Organization of the museum in accordance with the individual needs of the community.

3. Closer cooperation between creative artist and educator to emphasize aesthetic values where at present little more than the historic facts are given.

It will be clear from what has been said that much has already been done in the United States along the lines suggested, though

no one acquainted with museums will doubt that much remains to be done. The attitude manifested in the eagerness of the American museum visitor to "get the facts on art" perhaps reflects a national trait, and as such can hardly be eradicated over night by a change in museum method or organization. It is a phase of the large problem of art education, direct as well as indirect. The teaching of "appreciation" will probably continue to present difficulties for a long time to come.

A complete presentation of the subject of this chapter would demand a study not only of art galleries specializing in definite fields, particularly in that of modernistic painting and sculpture, but of art exhibitions of a special nature in the larger cities. These appeal to a much more limited, though perhaps more influential public than do the general museums, though the modern museum is training its public for the kind of appreciation they seem to demand. Statistics regarding them are not easy to come by, since attendance records are not always kept and when kept are not uniformly tabulated. More space is given them in newspapers and periodicals than was the case ten years ago, though art would make a poor showing, comparatively or actually, if contrasted on a basis of newspaper space with sports, the radio, the motion picture or books.

Art exhibitions may be divided into three kinds: dealer's exhibitions, which are as frankly intended to sell the objects on view as are automobile shows, yet which do play and have played a large part in the art education of the public; exhibitions, usually depending on outside financial aid, which have the dual purpose of educating the public and of selling the work of gifted artists; and exhibitions which are purely cultural. The three types are interdependent. If the "cultural" art show is successful in arousing a popular interest, that interest ought to be reflected sooner or later in purchases of works of art and in a demand for better aesthetic quality—or perhaps it would be more accurate to say, for a quality more in keeping with the aesthetic standards of specialists in the arts—in articles of common use.

An interesting recent development, which indicates that the public is willing to pay to see works of art, is the organization of loan exhibitions for which an admission fee is charged, the proceeds being turned over to some charity. Outdoor exhibits of sculpture

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are growing in popularity where weather or climate permits, notably in California. In New York City alone, according to the *American Art News*, there were 90 art exhibitions in the month of February, 1905, and 429 for the corresponding month of 1930, more than two-thirds of this increase taking place between 1925 and 1930. Art exhibits have been a conspicuous feature, whatever else may be said about them, of all our world's fairs. Art is becoming an important feature of many state fairs. Finally, there are travelling exhibitions which enable people in the smaller cities and towns to see pictures and other works of art which were formerly accessible only in the larger centers.

The travelling exhibitions, which are of growing importance, include those of the American Federation of Arts; the Grand Central Art Galleries, a cooperative organization which is attempting avowedly to apply business principles to the marketing of the work of painters and sculptors; and, in a more limited field, those of the College Art Association and the Art Center of New York City. In addition, as has already been said, an increasing number of museums send out loan collections, though these consist as a rule of prints, slides and photographs.

The experience of the American Federation of Arts reflects an interest in art exhibitions among at least a portion of the public which does not ordinarily have access to them. Its first collection was sent out in response to a request from Fort Worth, Texas; in recent years they have gone into nearly every state in the union, as well as to Canada and even Europe.

"The exhibitions in their travels," the Federation states,<sup>22</sup> "prove that art knows no boundaries or limitations; a group which is shown one month in a great museum, against a background of rare and beautiful things, may be shown the next month at a state fair, in company with prize cattle and crops. It visits colleges, women's clubs, public libraries, schools and other institutions too numerous to mention, and is at home in all of them . . . The Travelling Exhibitions are not biased, not intended to mould opinion favorably to any one style of art. Works of both conservatives and modernists are included impartially, but only such works as are withstanding the test of time, or are by artists of recognized ability."

<sup>22</sup> *Some Services Rendered by the American Federation of Arts*, leaflet published by the Federation, Washington, 1932.

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In Table 16, taken from Federation reports, are shown the number of exhibitions sent out each year from 1909-1910 to 1930-1931, together with the total number of engagements in which they were shown.

TABLE 16.—NUMBER OF TRAVELLING EXHIBITIONS SENT OUT BY AMERICAN FEDERATION OF ARTS, 1909-1931, AND NUMBER OF ENGAGEMENTS IN WHICH THEY WERE SHOWN

Year	Number of exhibitions	Number of engagements in which shown	Year	Number of exhibitions	Number of engagements in which shown
1909-1910.....	3	9	1920-1921.....	50	214
1910-1911.....	9	35	1921-1922.....	52	272
1911-1912.....	13	43	1922-1923.....	56	257
1912-1913.....	22	89	1923-1924.....	51	205
1913-1914.....	21	114	1924-1925.....	42	181
1914-1915.....	26	124	1925-1926.....	42	245
1915-1916.....	30	152	1926-1927.....	45	295
1916-1917.....	31	125	1927-1928.....	44	292
1917-1918.....	19	106	1928-1929.....	47	309
1918-1919.....	28	143	1929-1930.....	50	285
1919-1920.....	45	168	1930-1931.....	56	333

Each "engagement" of a particular exhibition means a showing of that exhibition in a different community, but since many communities take more than one exhibition the number of engagements is greater than the number of communities receiving the exhibitions. One museum, for thirteen years prior to 1932, took from six to fifteen of the exhibitions annually. Some of the exhibitions have had unusual significance, measured not only by subject matter but by attendance. That of industrial art (1928-1931) had a total attendance of 684,756. That of Mexican art, shown in 1931 and 1932, had more than 450,000. Although local museums are desirable show places they are not essential to the exhibitions; any adequate space, satisfactorily lighted, will do. The very fact that the exhibitions are travelling and temporary, and that they bring something not ordinarily to be seen in the communities visited, insures them a favorable press; and they are perhaps visited by many people whose artistic interests would not take them into a permanent museum. Novelty has an appeal that the arts profit by just as commerce and industry do.

Attendance at art exhibitions at state fairs to which the American Federation of Arts has sent collections shows large totals. At the Rochester (N. Y.) Exposition it was estimated at 50,000

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for each of the two years prior to 1932. At the South Florida Fair some fifty persons viewed the modest art show of a decade ago, but the attendance rose in recent years to between 1,000 and 5,000. The art show at the State Fair at Montgomery, Alabama, drew 54,757 visitors in 1929 and 43,176 in 1930, the decline apparently being due to a general drop in attendance at the fair, which in turn was held to be due to the depression. At the Oklahoma State Fair it is estimated that at least fifty or sixty thousand persons out of a total attendance of 264,000 in 1930 "went through the Art Department."

At the Michigan State Fair and Exposition in 1929 about 210,000 persons visited the Art Building, and in 1930 about 185,000. About 150,000 each year see the art exhibit at the Ohio State Fair at Columbus. The Tennessee State Fair at Nashville drew 125,000 visitors to its art exhibit in 1928, and about 150,000 in 1929 and 1930. At least 75 percent of the visitors to the Butler County Fair, at Hamilton, Ohio, out of a total of about 20,000, visit the art exhibition. The North Carolina State Fair's art exhibition draws about 30,000 persons each year. At the Western Washington Fair at Puyallup attendance at the art shows runs from sixty to eighty thousand and has gone as high as 100,000.

The art lecture, of course, runs through all art education, direct and indirect. As a branch of the kind of general lecturing which has been going on ever since Emerson's day it is probably growing less important. But the passing of art lectures with lantern slides, or with no illustrations at all, may mean only a shifting of interest in the art field and not a positive decline. As works of art are made more accessible it is natural that people should prefer to see them for themselves, perhaps under the guidance of an instructor, perhaps alone, rather than listen to detached lectures about them. A somewhat similar statement may be made concerning the use of art books, though there it is necessary to be more cautious. No one, as the women's clubs are said to have discovered, can learn about art solely by reading books. On the other hand, books about art are valuable supplementary material, and a person in search of cultural understanding cannot afford to overlook them. The use of such books in libraries, as well as the use of other artistic material which modern libraries furnish, is therefore pertinent to the present discussion.

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It is generally agreed that every city of 250,000 population or more can support an art museum, independently of a general museum or as part of it. Many cities of less than 250,000 have proven themselves able to maintain such institutions. But for cities of 100,000 or less the need filled in larger communities by the art museum must usually be met, to the best of its ability, by the library. The division of functions is, therefore, largely a matter of population. It is not often that one man can see the cultural problem of an entire large community as a whole, as did the late John Cotton Dana in Newark, New Jersey, and build up not only a library but a museum of the arts and of natural history. But art collections, including circulating prints, are nowadays as much a part of even a great public library as art books. If these services are measured absolutely they are found to have increased during the past decade. If they are measured in relation to other branches of library service, they have, in volume, in most cases failed to grow.<sup>33</sup> The absolute increase in a large city library is shown in Table 17, which gives figures for the New York Public Library.

TABLE 17.—NUMBER OF READERS AND NUMBER OF VOLUMES CONSULTED IN THE FIELD OF THE ARTS (EXCLUDING MUSIC) IN THE NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY IN 1919 AND 1929

	1919		1929	
	Number of readers	Number of volumes consulted	Number of readers	Number of volumes consulted
Art room.....	41,098	101,568	59,218	143,304
Print room.....	4,840	9,328	7,345	11,063
Art books used in main reading room.....	.....	32,819	.....	62,169
Total use of art books in Reference Dept.....	.....	892,298	.....	1,915,415

In the same library there was a circulation of 293,303 books in the field of the arts (music, as a separate department, is not included) in 1919 out of a total circulation of 9,892,648. In 1929, 370,552 arts books were circulated out of a total of 11,103,019. Roughly, therefore, the arts gained about 25 percent while general circulation was gaining about half as much. Other cities do not show the demand for art books in such a favorable light. In Chicago

<sup>33</sup> For statistical and other material used in this section the authors are indebted to H. M. Lydenberg of the New York Public Library; Miss Marion Cummings of the Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh; and Miss Etheldred Abbott of the Chicago Art Institute.

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there was a steady drop in such demand between 1920 and 1929. In St. Louis there was a rise from 1900 to 1915, followed by a drop and a partial recovery by 1929. In seven typical city libraries whose reports were analyzed by Miss Marion Cummings, 9.28 percent of the increase in the acquisition of non-fiction books in 1915 was in the field of art, whereas in 1929 the percentage was only 7.14. In other words, the relative rate of increase has slowed down. Art books made up 7 percent of the non-fiction circulation in these libraries in 1915 and only 5.89 percent in 1929.

Circulation, however, is at best an inaccurate standard of measurement. Dr. Arthur E. Bostwick of the St. Louis Public Library made the interesting comment that the number of volumes used is not an accurate indication of actual reader interest, since "the use of twenty pictures in one portfolio would be counted as one, whereas the use of only two pictures, provided they were in different portfolios, would count as two." Unless the habits of readers consulting fine arts books in libraries during the period under discussion have changed this fact would not affect the trends; it justifies, however, a certain amount of caution in dealing with the gross figures.

Whatever the statistics of circulation, most libraries have found it necessary in recent years to increase the range and intensiveness of their fine arts departments. Cleveland, for example, had one art assistant in its public library in 1913 and five in 1930. In Detroit the staff in the art department increased from three to six between 1920 and 1930, and in Los Angeles from four to twelve between 1915 and 1930. In Detroit, between 1921 and 1930, the number of reference questions in the fine arts fields increased by 140 percent. In Denver, where the library organized its Fine Arts Department in 1926, there has been a steady growth; three full time art librarians were employed in 1930, and art reference questions were 14.21 percent of the total for all subjects. At the Carnegie Library in Pittsburgh the total art reference questions increased by 200 percent between 1920 and 1930, averaging 6.8 percent of all reference questions in the latter year.

"On the whole," says Miss Cummings, in summing up the situation as of the end of 1930, "the years 1915 to 1920 dealt a blow, relatively speaking, to the art enthusiasm of the library user. The World War brought up many other interests and art



percentages had to drop. The women's clubs all through the Central and Western states have had new things to think about. And yet the level is coming up again, and there is no doubt that a larger percentage of American library borrowers knows something about art than before the war. But the proof must be found elsewhere than in the statistics." It is manifest that if a drop had already taken place in "the art enthusiasm of the library user" between 1915 and 1920 the further drop after 1920 is all the more significant. It may, however, indicate a slow recovery from the trend away from the arts which characterized the war-time psychology.

Mr. H. M. Lydenberg of the New York Public Library gives testimony similar to that of Miss Cummings. "Qualitative changes," he points out, "offer a field of more interesting observation. The growing importance of art in the academic curriculum is quickly reflected by an increase of student readers, and by enlarging fields of research, historical and aesthetic. More and larger art schools also contribute their quota to a public whose formal training makes them 'art-conscious,' even though they are not practicing artists. More frequent exhibitions, especially those devoted to the decorative arts, more conscious use of design in manufactured articles involving a wider search for unusual motives, a larger volume of advertising with a predominantly pictorial appeal, all these factors are very evident in book and periodical literature and are definitely indicated as well by the interest and demands of readers . . .

"As for contemporary art, the interest here is very pronounced and articulate on the part of a public varied in its angle of approach. The amateur seeks an explanation of modernist forms, the designer has a keen eye for current European work, and the critic is busily evaluating national production or the individual exponents of some given form of art. In the print room a marked increase of use is evident. More significant is the character of this use. The study of prints as an exercise in aesthetics has continued in much the same way as it has been carried on for years. But with it comes a widening in interest, an appreciation that the art of the print can be carried into many forms of our daily and business life that formerly knew little or nothing of prints and engravings. In short, the aesthetic appeal has lost nothing, the practical appeal has extended widely . . .

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"In the field of music the comment of the circulation staff is that the audience of today seems to show a perceptibly higher average of musical understanding than the audience of 1920. In spite of the amazing growth of radio and the many improvements in recorded music the number of concerts is steadily increasing. The development of the intelligent listener is reflected in the use of the Library by people who want to understand better the works that they hear. There is an increasing tendency to look on music less as a sort of supernatural mystery which only the divinely appointed may hope to penetrate and more as a highly developed special field in which even a layman may profitably take a few steps, and in which he may possibly cultivate a ripe understanding if he puts his mind to it. This is probably due in great part to the far reaching changes which have come about in every sphere of music education during this period. Less attention is being paid to music as a drawing-room accomplishment and more as a general cultural study. With a few exceptions there is at present less passionate interest in the performer and more in the music itself."

Music will be considered in a later chapter, but these opinions of an experienced librarian have their pertinence at this stage of the discussion. Whether such opinions are affected by "wishful thinking" is a question the reader must determine for himself. The good librarian is a missionary by profession and must not be expected to give a counsel of despair. On the other hand, he comes closer to the adult public in its leisure moments than perhaps any other disinterested member of the community.

The place of different subjects in the interests of library patrons in eighteen widely distributed American cities, as reflected in 119,745 questions asked of reference librarians, was studied in 1928 by W. W. Charters.<sup>34</sup> Mr. Charters classified the questions under eight specific fields and one "general" heading. In this list the arts stood fourth, being exceeded only by science and technology, sociology and history. Table 18, which is adapted from Mr. Charters' study, shows the average percentage distribution and the median distribution of the questions asked, as reported by the eighteen reference librarians.

<sup>34</sup> In *School and Society*, February 4, 1928, pp. 150-152. Cited by Gray and Monroe in *The Reading Habits of Adults*, New York, 1929.

## THE ARTS IN AMERICAN LIFE

TABLE 18.—AVERAGE PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION AND MEDIAN DISTRIBUTION OF 119,-  
745 QUESTIONS ASKED OF REFERENCE LIBRARIANS IN 18 AMERICAN LIBRARIES

Class	Average	Median	Class	Average	Median
General.....	4.0	2.5	Science and Technology.....	22.5	18.0
Philosophy.....	1.7	1.5	Fine Arts.....	13.5	11.0
Religion.....	2.2	2.2	Literature.....	11.3	12.5
Sociology.....	21.4	22.7	History.....	21.0	24.2
Philology.....	2.4	12.4			

Another approach to reader interest is that worked out by Douglas Waples and Ralph W. Tyler in their study of *What People Want to Read About*.<sup>35</sup> The authors selected with great care a list of 115 topics and succeeded in inducing a number of diversified groups to indicate their preferences. They found that all groups of men which were sampled, including prisoners in a house of correction, male high school teachers, farmers, college graduates and non-college graduates, "avoided" the subject of "art and art crafts"—that is to say, ranked it, in order of preference, in the lower fifth of the 115 topics. The women's attitude was harder to gauge. Women high school teachers gave music the highest attainable mark, with "civic beauty and architecture" a little lower. College women did not put art in the upper fifth but non-college women with one accord put it in the lower fifth. The unavoidable inference was that among the groups studied the typical male was positive of his lack of interest in art, whereas the subject occupied a median position in the mind of the typical female. Here, certainly, we encounter the same attitude which long tended to keep men out of art classes, at least in co-educational schools, and which has made them hesitate to express an interest in the subject. Unluckily for the cause of precision it is not possible to differentiate between the reading in the field of art in our libraries done by men and that done by women. The study by Waples and Tyler, moreover, explicitly revealed what individuals and groups wanted to read about and not what they actually did read about.

If the data set forth in this chapter are reviewed, evidence will be found that a great deal is being done, by means of indirect

<sup>35</sup> Published by the American Library Association and the University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1931.

## ART EDUCATION OUTSIDE SCHOOLS

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education, to interest the American people in the fine arts. The machinery for doing this is increasing in cost and bulk and probably in effectiveness. There is far more cooperation than there used to be between the direct and the indirect agencies—the schools and colleges on the one hand and the museums and libraries on the other. The museums are beginning to work with business men and manufacturers, with results that will be touched upon in later chapters. The rising importance of art in all these fields may reasonably be described as a movement. How much this movement is the result of a popular demand and how much it is being guided from above is a problem that need not be solved here. That vast abstraction called the Public may not consciously desire that other abstraction called Art. It does accept it, to an appreciable degree, when it is offered.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE AMERICAN AND HIS ARCHITECTURE

ARCHITECTURE is one art, obviously, which no one possessing eyesight and living in a civilized community can ignore, for we must each dwell in some kind of building and in the course of our daily life cannot escape seeing a good many others. Moreover, it is probably impossible for any of us to avoid forming some kind of taste regarding the looks of buildings. We cannot apply quantitative measurements to a nation's architecture as a means of judging it, for architecture of some kind it must and will have. We must ask what kind of architecture it has. To apply this method to a study of cultural trends in the United States and at the same time refrain from passing aesthetic judgments is not an easy task. But it is possible to differentiate between buildings which are planned by architects and those which are not, to ascertain what types of buildings are in use and what ideas are afloat concerning them, and to examine the opinions of competent persons as to prevailing trends.<sup>36</sup>

Architecture in the modern age is clearly a product of many forces: tradition, extending back into the childhood of the race; social and economic conditions, influencing the price of land, the locations of buildings and the purposes for which we need buildings; technological considerations, which determine materials and methods of construction; and, increasingly in recent years, legal requirements expressed in zoning laws and obligations entered into by purchasers of land in real estate subdivisions. The skyscraper architecture of New York and Chicago, as is well known, has been given a distinct character by ordinances determining the "sheath" within which a large structure must be confined. The early development of Forest Hills, Long Island, by the Russell Sage Foundation, and the later establishment of Palos Verdes, near

<sup>36</sup> See the statement on this subject by Dr. Leicester B. Holland, of the Library of Congress, in Chapter XIX of *Recent Social Trends in the United States*. Here the social rather than the aesthetic trends are stressed.

Los Angeles, by a commercial corporation, were attempts to achieve a harmonious architecture and layout of grounds. More recently the (New York) City Housing Corporation has built a "town for the motorized age," at Radburn, New Jersey, with streets as well as houses laid out in keeping with modern ideas and conditions. Restricted suburban real estate developments of a less adventurous sort are familiar the country over, though the standards imposed are more often financial than aesthetic, and there is frequently a clash of styles borrowed from all periods and countries.

The garden suburb is not an American invention. But America has led in the building of skyscrapers, not, perhaps, because these structures appealed to our people as a new form of aesthetic expression but because of a tendency toward concentration of population in cities and in limited areas within cities. The most ambitious of these buildings have been erected since 1920. The resulting street congestion has led to the advocacy of a stricter relation between height, bulk and open space, such as is embodied in the unofficial *Regional Plan of New York and Its Environs*, made public in 1931. It may be that the tide is now turning and that the decade between 1922 and 1932 will be looked back to as the era *par excellence* of unrestricted skyscraper building. Almost all of New York's highest structures, including the Empire State, Chrysler and Chanin buildings, belong in this period; as do such structures as the Board of Trade Building in Chicago, the New Wanamaker Building in Philadelphia, the Penobscot Building in Detroit, and the City Hall in Los Angeles. It is not too much to say that the downtown section of every growing city in the United States has been architecturally made over since 1920. The skylines of the two largest cities, New York and Chicago, have been changed almost beyond recognition, and those of such cities as Philadelphia, Detroit, St. Louis, San Francisco and Los Angeles have been profoundly altered. Boston and Washington, in both of which cities building heights have been drastically limited, are among the few large cities which do not present the aspect of a man-made Sierra when their congested sections are seen against the horizon.

As has been seen, Louis Sullivan and others were considering the skyscraper as a new architectural form toward the end of the

nineteenth century, but the boldest experiments were not made until two decades later. The outstanding skyscraper previous to 1920 was undoubtedly the Woolworth Building (1912) in New York City—an attempt to reconcile the Gothic tradition with a steel framework. Today it stands in strong contrast with a number of more recent structures which, whatever their aesthetic merits, are in many instances in an entirely new architectural vernacular. Skyscraper architecture of the post-war years represents a groping for a new style, an effort to express post-war America in building materials. On the part of the architect this effort is necessarily conscious. On the part of the client it may not be wholly so, even though the tall building has come to be regarded, like a three-dimensional billboard, as a form of advertising. But usually the client must think first in terms of the financial stability of his building and after that of its aesthetic integrity.

“The architect might as well never have wasted his time learning to design,” says Edwin Avery Park, with ironic exaggeration. “His job is now that of financial engineer, his time spent in cutting, scraping and shoe-horning, trying to produce something, without time to worry much over how that thing will look. The practice of architecture today is not a luxury, no longer a career for the inoffensive aesthete. The architect’s office is not a studio, it is a workshop . . . The answer to the question, what is our modern architecture, might be that it is an irreducible minimum. It is four-fifths sacrifice and one-fifth precious new ore. Our modern architecture is frankly commercial, at least that portion of it which may be reckoned vital. It is in the field of commercial work that our most significant geniuses have found themselves for the very reason that they have had to merge the desire for personal expression with the hard facts of a problem. They have thought less about themselves and more about finding out something for all to share; something logically fitted to new conditions.”<sup>37</sup>

To say that our typical architecture is commercial is not, of course, necessarily to disparage either architecture or commerce. Every building has always had a use, whether that use was described as “practical” or not. The uses of the pyramids were dynastic, religious, perhaps scientific. The kings of Egypt had a very prosaic interest in the careful preservation and entombment

<sup>37</sup> Edwin Avery Park, *New Backgrounds for a New Age*, New York, 1927, pp. 141-143.

of their bodies, and in the perpetuation of their memories after death. The Parthenon had its religious and also its chauvinistic purposes. The great cathedrals of medieval times were essential parts of the life of their period; they were built by a people to whom religious worship was as much a part of the day's activities as buying and selling.

The commercial and industrial buildings of modern America must be regarded as quite as true a reflection of the necessities of the time. Ornament seemed necessary to the builders of ancient Athens and of medieval Paris and Cologne; in a sense "form followed function" in their structures none the less because the function, though absolutely real, was also intangible. But when the same formula is applied to a modern office building or factory the result is an elimination of "useless" ornament because the function of the structure is to furnish convenient housing for business men, clerks or workers, and machines. The "practical" requirements of our day give us more and more, therefore, the simplicity of unbroken lines and undecorated surfaces. The architect's problem has not vanished, it has merely been re-stated in different terms. Sheldon Cheney has called the result "stripped architecture." "Stripped architecture" is not uniquely American. Nevertheless its boldest and most massive exemplifications are to be found in the United States, and have mainly come into being since the end of the World War.

The history of the skyscraper in America, from Sullivan's time on, is the record of a trend away from the old architectural "elements." Less and less do our builders plunder Grecian and Roman temples, or medieval castles and cathedrals for their ideas. This is not to say that the old ideas are dead; indeed, it may well be that the fundamental principles of proportion do not change, and it may be that the designers who create buildings in the spirit of their times are actually more in harmony with the classic builders than are those who copy bodily from the antique, and who erect a Mayan or Egyptian temple to house a motion picture theatre. The classic styles survive, but they are tending to disappear from the skyscraper.

"Many a daring American engineering feat of those early days," says Sheldon Cheney, "was, so to speak, sunk without trace under oceans of Roman pilasters and columns or Gothic



traceries. The mask might be story on story of identical superimposed pilasters and incipient cornices, or piled-up arches (the windows of two or three stories peeping out timidly under each arch), or perhaps an adaptation of some historic monument, like the Metropolitan Tower enveloped in a semblance of St. Mark's Campanile, or an honest, shaft-like building set on a triumphal Roman arch and capped with a Greek temple. But even while the architect was thus hiding the real structure, the engineer was technically perfecting the new method of building, was fabricating his steel frame economically and honestly, was fitting to it the new network of veins, nerves, digestive and waste organs: the plumbing, the wiring, the heating system, the elevators, etc. The structural engineer made the interior of the building safe, convenient and simple; even though a huge hollow metal or real stone cornice might hang over the top edge outside, cutting off light and endangering lives below, while a hundred Palladian window-frames complicated the simple upward lines."<sup>38</sup>

The engineer approached the erection and equipment of the high building much as he did the creation of a locomotive, a dynamo, a bridge or an ocean liner. The first desideratum was that the machine should do its work as well and as economically as possible. "Looks" were emphatically secondary. The engineer had no training in the aesthetic, though he might possess a profound appreciation of it. Sometimes, not consciously seeking it, he achieved it by the sheer economy of his methods—as the Roeblings did in the Brooklyn bridge. Of that structure Montgomery Schuyler, a contemporary critic, said: "It is an organism of nature. There was no question in the mind of the designer of 'good taste' or of appearance. He learned the law that struck its curves, the law that fixed the strength of the relation of its parts, and he applied the law. His work is beautiful, as the work of a ship-builder is unfailingly beautiful in the forms and outlines in which he is only studying 'what the water likes' without a thought of beauty."<sup>39</sup> It has seemed to many critics, both before and since, that structural integrity is the basis of beauty in buildings as well as in bridges. It was the disastrous collapse of "the new North-wing of the old State Capital" at Madison, Wisconsin,

<sup>38</sup> Sheldon Cheney, *The New World Architecture*, New York, 1930, p. 124.

<sup>39</sup> Quoted by Lewis Mumford, *The Brown Decades*, p. 103.

that set the young Frank Lloyd Wright to thinking along lines which made him one of the foremost of our contemporary architects.

Skyscraper architecture may be thought of as being more and more the result of a reconciliation of the ideas of engineer and architect. The two in classic times must have been one. Their paths diverged when aesthetic ideas were largely relegated to the aesthetes after the Renaissance. Our study of schools of art has shown that architecture is still having trouble in making up its mind whether it belongs with engineering or with fine arts, and that the solution is probably being found in making it a bridge between the two. In strict logic the unrestricted application of the functional idea to buildings would be, aesthetically, a counsel of despair. It would mean that buildings would take shapes determined not by their appeal to the eye but by certain laws of nature. A given structure for a given purpose would become a geometrical and engineering problem with but one perfect solution. The result would be comparable to that attained by giving up the art of painting and limiting ourselves strictly to the camera.

But the most casual observation of American skyscrapers of the past decade shows that no such effect has been produced. The whole shell as well as the interior of the city office building might easily be standardized. A single design might have a thousand applications. As a matter of fact no such tendency has revealed itself. All modern skyscrapers belong to a recognizable family. They look alike just as to an Occidental all Chinese may seem to look alike. But within the skyscraper family there is an almost startling diversity. This is true even of the products of modernistic architects who have discarded the "orders" and attempted to solve their problems in terms of steel, cement and utility. Set-backs, towers, massive and almost pyramidal effects, emphasized perpendiculars, emphasized horizontals, different treatments of windows, rounded corners, often fenestrated to bring out the fact that the building is not supported by its exterior sheath, truncated summits, needle-like spires, varying treatments of the exterior in different colors, patterns and textures—in these the modern skyscraper architect finds a wide field for invention and selection. Consider also that not all architects have been willing to discard entirely the symbols of the past, and the raggedness of the metropolitan skylines is easy to explain.

Except in the cases of certain groups of civic buildings no attempt has been made in any American city to achieve either uniformity or harmony in the styles of great buildings. If Boston lacks the jagged profile of most of our cities it is only because restrictions on building heights have kept the skyline clipped. In the older sections of the older cities a degree of uniformity was achieved, partly because, before the introduction of the elevator, a natural limit on height was set by the refusal of tenants to climb an indefinite number of flights of stairs. The Vieux Carré of New Orleans is a charming and familiar example. The newer type of buildings—at least of business buildings—has produced no such harmony. Each is an upthrust of individualism. Each is the result of an effort to be distinctive. In one or two of the smaller cities architectural harmony has been sought by legal or cooperative means, as in Santa Barbara after the earthquake of 1925. But though the Santa Barbara plan had to do with business structures it involved no skyscrapers.

The diversity among recent skyscrapers may be shown by the mention of a few which have attracted attention in recent years. Among tower-like buildings, with emphasis upon perpendicular lines, we find the Irving Trust Company's skyscraper in New York City; the Bush Terminal Building, erected in New York City a few years before our period opens; the black and gold American Radiator building in the same city; the Tribune Tower in Chicago; and the News Building in New York City. Sometimes the tower is made to rise from a massive base, as is the case with the Gothic Woolworth Building; the Shelton Hotel in New York City; the New York Telephone Building; the Chanin Building in New York City; and the Empire State Building.

Sometimes the building is simply stepped back, in accordance with the legal requirements, giving, as has been observed, the effect of "proportioned boxes," piled one on top of another. Some architects like to emphasize the units of which their structures are made by bands or other ornamental devices at the set-back line. Others leave them unbroken, so that the eye goes upward without an interruption. Few of the builders of lofty business structures can resist the temptation to soar; a quite opposite effect is often produced in "skyscrapers" of more moderate height by bands at each story, with practically continuous window

space between. To an observer unfamiliar with steel construction—indeed, to almost any observer of half a century ago or earlier—the walls of such buildings would appear to be miraculously supported by thin sheets of glass. Of course, they are actually hung on the steel framework and need have only enough strength to hold together and enough thickness to protect the inmates of the building from the weather. They are the building's clothes or skin; the sustaining skeleton is evident only as the architect cares to indicate it by cement piers. As we grow accustomed to thinking in terms of steel framework these may be thought unnecessary.

In determining the color, texture and pattern of his sheath the skyscraper architect, like other architects, has a far wider choice of materials and effects than was possible even a few years ago. He may use brick or stone, as architects have done for centuries. He may use cement, giving it almost any aspect he likes—moulding it, indeed, like a sculptor working in clay. He may use far more glass than would have been dreamed of a decade ago. He may sheathe the top of his building in metal, using the non-tarnishable alloys which have come into extensive use since the World War. So far the treatment of outer surfaces has been nowhere near so startling as has that of the fundamental lines and masses, but there are indications that we are in for an era of experimentation in this field. One obstacle to the use of color of any delicacy is that our cities are still excessively smoky. A few years or even months are enough to reduce the chaste white cement of a new Manhattan building to a dingy gray. Boston, Cleveland, Pittsburgh, Detroit, Chicago, St. Louis and Kansas City are no better off; Washington, which is not an industrial city, and Los Angeles, where electricity is much used and oil is cheaper than coal, are more fortunate. The elimination or reduction of the smoke evil, which experiments have shown to be technically and economically possible, will undoubtedly do much in adding color to city architecture.

The skyscraper, though it is acknowledged to be America's most original contribution to architecture, is not, measured even by tonnage, our most important type of building. Comparatively few persons live in skyscrapers, and many millions rarely even see them. To comprehend the impact of architecture upon the American people we must also consider stores (most of which are

not skyscrapers), factories, theatres, schools, churches, public buildings, and, above all, homes. If this list is re-read it will be at once realized that modernism has influenced some types of structures more than others. Religious bodies, colleges and universities, and governments tend toward conservatism. To the thought behind most churches and many college buildings Mr. Cheney has given the striking title of "refuge architecture." "The escapists," he tells us, "are visualizing the new home and office and factory as too stripped, plain, severe, too consistently utilitarian, too little enriched; just as they visualize a balancing refuge-architecture, churches and the like."<sup>40</sup>

There is a close connection between the things men worship and the places in which by preference they worship them, and an analysis of religious architecture would involve an analysis of religion. Religious architecture in America has seen its stages of stately Georgian and of cluttered eclectic. The Romanesque had its vogue, and during the past decade there have been a number of new Gothic churches. The Cathedral of St. John the Divine in New York City, begun before the World War, is medieval in conception and execution, and on a grand scale. At the same time the past decade has seen experiments with the "skyscraper church," and with churches which have made excellent use of the technique of the skyscraper architect in achieving soaring lines. The tower of one such structure, in Tulsa, Oklahoma, might, if magnified a few times, fit readily into Manhattan's skyscraper silhouette.

Collegiate architects are often compelled to adapt new buildings to the styles of old in order to secure harmony. One Gothic dormitory, as at Princeton, seems to lead to another, though a faithful adherence to Gothic principles tends to deprive the inmates of light and air. The Harkness quadrangle at Yale is Gothic in design and execution and has already inspired more Gothic. At both Harvard and Yale, of course, the original buildings were plain Colonial in style. Collegiate Gothic, too, is apparently firmly established at the University of Chicago, whose educational policies are notably progressive and modernistic. At the University of Pittsburgh a "Skyscraper of Learning" has been built, though it has not attained to the height originally projected.

<sup>40</sup> *The New World Architecture*, op. cit. p. 329.

Northwestern University has piled up in miniature in recent years a contemporary metropolitan skyline. The erection of university skyscrapers, needless to say, is not necessarily an architectural advance; it is merely an architectural development. The commercial skyscraper is the product—and from one point of view the creator as well, as part of a vicious circle—of high land values resulting from congestion. A university with plenty of land at its disposal is under no necessity to soar unless the soaring is conceived as expressing the spirit of higher education; in which case the university skyscraper becomes essentially quite a different thing from the commercial skyscraper. It is important for the present purpose only as indicating a tendency on the part of at least a few universities to break away from classical orders and experiment with new structural forms.

Experimentation in governmental buildings has not, in the mass, gone far. In the early days of the Republic Americans looked eagerly to Graeco-Roman models in public buildings as in political ideas. The domed Capitol at Washington gave birth to domes of State Capitols all over the country. Columns and porticos were thought essential to the dignity of government. The results still dominate Washington and other capital cities. Attempts to get away from the earlier traditions, as in the Philadelphia City Hall and the building now occupied by the State and War Departments in Washington, were not always happy. The classical purity of the Lincoln Memorial or the massive practicality of the new Department of Commerce building seems, even to an eye accustomed to experimental skyscrapers, a vast improvement. For originality in public buildings, however, it is necessary to turn to such architects as Bertram Goodhue, whose Nebraska State Capitol, gripping the prairie with its massive base, rises skyward in a majestic tower. This structure belongs easily in our special period, for it was not begun until 1922. Mr. Goodhue also designed the Los Angeles Public Library, another recent building, with its powerful suggestion of the massive planes of the ancient Egyptian designers. The new state capitol of Louisiana, at Baton Rouge, is a strikingly modern and dignified replacement of a building which Mark Twain once denounced, in quite a twentieth century vein, as a "little sham castle" and an "architectural falsehood." The Los Angeles City Hall, completed in 1928, has, like Goodhue's

Nebraska Capitol, a great tower rising from a wide base, and is a practicable combination of monumental character and office building convenience.

Except in the national capitol the financial stringency following 1929 tended to discourage public building. Moreover, except in rapidly growing communities, the replacement of old governmental structures by new ones is likely to be slow. Governments are not under the same compulsion as commercial enterprises to make their activities "pay"; they do not build and tear down with the recklessness of private enterprise in a great commercial city like New York. Some time, therefore, may be expected to elapse before modernistic ideas of architecture will be found widely expressed in governmental structures.

But the few outstanding examples of such modernized buildings have attracted so much attention, on the whole of a favorable nature, that it is reasonable to expect many more in years to come. The skyscraper has obviously impressed the American mind with its monumental character. When we seek that character in buildings devoted to public uses it is natural that we should be more influenced by the skyscraper than by more ancient models. The citizen who has grown accustomed to the Empire State Building will perhaps find the classical dome somewhat squat by comparison; and the growing ease of looking down on buildings from the air, giving an entirely new angle of vision, may be counted on to have its effect.

Theatres, particularly those for the exhibition of motion pictures, have been built in large numbers in recent years. Their designers, like the theatre designers of the past, had to consider not only the utilitarian purposes of the structure—seating capacity, acoustics, angles of vision, ventilation, lighting and stage equipment—but also the advertising element. A theatre cannot afford to be too modest, and the typical American theatre is not. Technical and other considerations have led to very rapid changes in every detail, both interior and exterior. New problems have been presented, which the architects have had to solve in new ways. Communities which once had only town halls or crude "opera houses" have proven able to support magnificent motion picture palaces. Between 1914 and 1927, according to the *Census of Manufactures*, the value of theatrical scenery and stage equip-

ment manufactured in the United States rose from \$327,000 to \$5,745,000 annually, though it dropped to \$5,508,000 in 1929. The money spent on theatre buildings was not only a vastly larger sum but probably increased in at least as great a proportion. A single theatre, the Roxy in New York City, completed in 1927, represented an investment of approximately \$12,000,000. The motion picture will be treated in a later chapter; it is mentioned here only because of the encouragement it has given to a certain style of architectural floridity.

It is difficult, indeed, to avoid a qualitative judgment in speaking of theatre design; it will probably be sufficient to state, however, that the motion picture "palace" has afforded an almost virgin field for experimentation, and that its architects have not been conspicuous for their excessive restraint. They have had to a large extent to satisfy a taste for luxury and display which in earlier days was met by the metropolitan hotel. In luxury, spaciousness and costliness the motion picture theatre has far out-distanced its "legitimate" contemporary. In New York City, the nation's theatrical capital, the "legitimate" theatres have been crowded off Broadway and into relatively obscure positions, and their places have been taken by motion picture houses. It is Mr. Cheney's opinion that "the average movie-level architect wallows in cheaper exhibitions of unrestrained ornament and catch-penny gilding and red-plushing" than the world has often witnessed; the "cheapness," of course, not being of the financial sort. It is too early as yet to say whether the first exuberance of this type of playhouse will become toned down. Certainly little more is to be done in the way of elaboration, and the next steps, when taken, must be toward greater simplicity.

Laying questions of taste aside, the motion picture playhouses undeniably provide greater comfort and a greater sense of nearness to the stage—if not actual nearness, which is not as desirable for the cinema as it is for the "legitimate" drama—than were available to large audiences prior to 1920. Mechanically and acoustically they are highly developed, many of them being ventilated with "conditioned"—that is, artificially cooled—air during the warm months. The motion picture industry can apparently afford the services of the best architects and may in time avail itself of them. Like the motion picture itself, however,



the level of cinema architecture has as yet shown no tendency to rise above that of the popular taste to which it ministers.

In the legitimate theatres architecture seems to be on the eve of an era of experimentation, though in the United States it has as yet gone little further. Our theatres, even the newer ones, are definitely, though often pleasingly stylized. The Guild Theatre in New York and the Chicago Opera House, itself novel in being an integral part of a skyscraper building, are interesting but reminiscent. From architects or designers such as Joseph Urban and Norman-Bel Geddes we get studies of startlingly futuristic buildings, but these have still to be realized in steel and cement. Community or college theatres, such as the Pasadena Community Playhouse, the Cleveland Playhouse and the well equipped theatre at Yale give opportunities which may be expected to be utilized increasingly with the development of the "Little Theatre" movement.

In turning from recreation to industry, from theatres to factory buildings, the observer comes into a field into which architecture as a conscious art was late in entering. The factory building is itself a relatively new thing in human experience. The first considerations affecting it were purely utilitarian—to house men and machinery in the most economical manner, and with more regard to the proper functioning of the machinery than to the health or comfort of the human beings operating it. Two influences seem to have altered this situation. One is humanitarianism, which is shocked by the denial of proper light and air to workers, though not always by ugliness. The other is the modern conception of "efficiency." Men and women have been found to produce more when under agreeable working conditions. The well organized modern factory, where the material in process moves steadily forward without confusion or clutter, where light, ventilation, temperatures and even humidity are scientifically studied, and where the external forms of the building express its functions, is probably aesthetically more satisfactory than its predecessor. The Swiss architect and critic, Le Corbusier, thinks so. He has called "the American grain elevators and factories the magnificent first fruits of the new age."

But only the most Puritanical of critics would maintain that beauty would necessarily result from nothing more than good

engineering. The American factory, grain elevator or gas tank takes its place among architectural achievements only when the designer has thought of it not merely as a tool or utensil but as an expression of civilization. Some of America's best known architects have designed warehouses and factories—Frank Lloyd Wright, in the Larkin Building in Buffalo as early as 1903; Ely Kahn, much later, in a Brooklyn building; Cass Gilbert in the Army Supply Base Warehouse in Brooklyn, which no layman, assuredly, would believe was produced by the same man who designed the Woolworth Building.

The movement has not gone far, and not all American factories are as yet beautiful or even comfortable. It is significant in what it promises to do rather than in what it has done. It is a false analogy to say that whereas medieval nations built cathedrals because their life was fundamentally religious a modern nation should express itself primarily in factories and warehouses because it is primarily industrial and commercial. The generalizations simply are not true. The factory, not to mention the warehouse, by no means fills the place in life that the cathedral once did. But it is an essential part of modern life as that life is lived. Even though the five-day week and six-hour day are introduced the working place will be second in men's thoughts only to the dwelling place. The attempt to relieve it of ugliness and monotony, in so far as the exigencies of the situation permit, is a humanitarian and democratic one, in line with enlightened labor legislation and with the conception of the national life as an integral whole rather than a series of class compartments. The ugliness of industrial structures has appalled sensitive critics ever since the beginning of the machine age. The frontal attack on that ugliness which now shows signs of beginning has implications which are more than aesthetic—which extend, indeed, to the very roots of our national culture.

But, when all is said and done, the test of a nation's architecture will not be in its public buildings, its railway stations, its skyscrapers, its churches or its factories but its homes. Medieval Europe would rank much lower than it does in the aesthetic scale if the houses of the people were lumped with the palaces and the churches. The same would be true of early New England or of the ante-bellum South, where for every white-spined church or

pillared and porticoed mansion there were hundreds of shacks and cabins. What of the American home of today? Is it, on the whole, not only more convenient than the home of yesterday but also more beautiful? To put the same question without prejudice, does it show evidence of changed or changing aesthetic standards?

We know that it is smaller and that the collective dwelling is gaining on the detached house.<sup>41</sup> In these respects there has been a great change not only in our ways of living but also in our domestic architecture. The American home may be anything from a Los Angeles bungalow to a Park Avenue apartment which costs in rent or maintenance each year several times the whole value of the bungalow; it may be anything from an Iowa or Vermont farmhouse to an East Side tenement, from a Negro's cabin in Mississippi to a Long Island country home. But if we wish to follow trends in architecture we are really limited, in this field, to the city apartment house, the suburban dwelling and the country homes of the well to do. The apartment house has greatly increased in number; it bears some relation to the skyscraper and often comes near being one; and it is usually designed by an architect. It is likely to be more "modern" than the separate house for the reason that, unless we except the venerable tenements of Edinburgh and a few other European cities or the cliff dwellings and the communal houses of the Pueblo Indians of New Mexico, there were no models for it. Like the skyscraper it is usually built upon a steel frame and is mechanically well serviced. Like the skyscraper it originated less in a demand for a new type of architecture than in an increase in land values. In its economy of space it reflects social and economic tendencies which are no part of the present discussion. It is well to bear in mind, nevertheless, that these tendencies may diminish or cease and that the apartment house may be a transient phase of architecture as well as of domestic economy.

If it does continue to exist, in the congested areas of cities, it will remain simply a specialized type of skyscraper. The most notable apartment house developments, aesthetically considered, have been those in outlying or deteriorated sections of our larger cities, usually made with some realization of the necessity for

<sup>41</sup> For a discussion of this point, with illustrative statistical material, see the monograph in this series by R. D. McKenzie, entitled *The Metropolitan Community*.

open space. The landscaping of inner courts and the placing and designing of buildings to admit a maximum of sunlight, as in certain developments around New York City, have been more worthy of note than any novel architectural ideas in the buildings themselves. Indeed, the apartment house architect is severely limited by the fact that what he is really putting together is a space saving machine. When provision has been made, under this limitation, for elevators, water, sewage, electricity, gas, heat and radio and telephone connections, little opportunity is left for flights of fancy. The most economical type of apartment house tends to resemble a box or series of boxes. For new ideas in this field America still turns at times to France, Holland or Germany. Only if hotels or "apartment hotels" are included in the category can one point to a number of notable modern structures, such as the Panhellenic Tower in New York City.

But if the apartment house in America lacks architectural distinction or variety, being often the result of an attempt to apply to a new sort of building an old type of pattern, the single dwelling house more than makes up for the omission. There can be no question that during the past decade American home owners have given more thought than ever before to the looks of their houses. The architectural pioneer in this field is Frank Lloyd Wright, who figures so largely in any discussion of modern American construction in any field. Mr. Wright's theory, which is worth quoting because it has found wide acceptance, is that "a building should be made to grow easily from its site, shaped to harmonize with its surroundings if Nature is manifest there; and if not, try to make it as quiet, substantial and organic as she would have been were the opportunity hers."<sup>42</sup> His prairie houses were characterized by "gently sloping roofs, low proportions, quiet sky lines, suppressed, heavysset chimneys and sheltering overhangs, low terraces and outreaching walls sequestering private gardens." Here we have, of course, the very antithesis of the skyscraper.

Curiously enough, the development of skyscraper and of apartment house has been taking place concurrently with a movement of population, within metropolitan regions, away from the more

<sup>42</sup> See *Modern Architecture*, Princeton University Press, 1931, for a discussion by Mr. Wright of his theories.

congested areas and into suburban districts.<sup>43</sup> The multiplication of the small house in such districts is not inconsistent with the increase of multi-family dwellings within the city limits. With few exceptions, suburban dwellings are outside the jurisdiction of the cities to which they are tributary, and their statistics therefore do not appear among the city building permits. There seem to be a constant drift of families to and from the suburbs, with a tendency for the larger families to find something like a traditional American home life outside the city proper.

Architecture for the small home is likely to fall into patterns for the reason that the average small-home owner cannot afford to pay a recognized architect a satisfactory fee for individual planning. As a rule originality is not to be looked for in this field, though there has undoubtedly been an increase in the number of homes which have had the benefit, even at one or two removes, of a recognizable architectural plan. The suburban house naturally varies according to its cost. At its cheapest it is, as Edwin Avery Park says, a standardized "box." "These boxes," Mr. Park continues,<sup>44</sup> "are either all the same, every other one reversed, and stand in the fearful endless ranks of the cheaper variety, or running the gamut of every known material and style they dot the landscape, like little separate experiments in doll housing. Architecture has made little advance here because of the fundamentally unsound basis of the whole performance." Often the "boxes," built on a wholesale plan by some real estate development company, are far from well made, with a rate of depreciation neatly timed to keep pace with an installment plan of payment, so that by the time the house is paid for little value is left in it. Distinctive architecture can hardly be looked for under such a system.

In the more costly kind of suburban dwellings the eclectic school of architects have had pretty much their own way; that is to say, they have borrowed, from many countries and periods, styles more or less well adapted to American climates and locations. The bungalow has multiplied all over the country, particularly in those regions where the winters are not severe enough to make the heating problem a serious one. California, Florida and the southern states as a whole have accepted the bungalow with

<sup>43</sup> McKenzie, *op. cit.*

<sup>44</sup> Edwin Avery Park, *New Backgrounds for a New Age*, New York, 1927, p. 157.

enthusiasm; it is to be seen in large numbers in the suburbs of such cities as Atlanta, Houston, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Portland and Seattle. Around northern cities in the Middle West and East one finds not only the bungalow but "colonial" styles and various modifications of the English cottage. Sometimes a northern suburb, even more than a southern or western, will be a veritable architectural museum, with almost every known style of house not only represented but set down in strange juxtaposition.

Here and there harmony has been arrived at by means of conditions accompanying the sale or lease of the land—the loosely named "garden suburb." Many such suburbs are treated as units, so that not only the individual houses but their placement, the spaces around them and the pattern of streets and parks are carefully studied in advance as parts of a uniform design. Proposals for the building of model communities go back as far as the time of Fourier in France, more than a century ago.<sup>45</sup> In England, in 1898, Mr. Ebenezer Howard published a book, *To-morrow*, which gave impetus to the modern garden city movement in that country. Letchworth, near London, is an outstanding example. In the United States, as early as 1869, Mr. Alexander T. Stewart, a New York merchant, projected a development which later became Garden City, Long Island. Radburn, New Jersey; Forest Hills, Long Island; Palos Verdes, near Los Angeles, California; and Sunnyside, Long Island, are examples of developments within recent years.

Two tendencies may be noted in such communities. One is, as has been implied, architectural harmony. More important is the attention given to such factors as sunlight, which is involved in the height and placement of buildings; traffic, which affects the layout of streets; and access to schools, stores, churches and places of recreation. These experiments have not been uniformly successful from any point of view. They suggest, however, the possible evolution of a type of domestic architecture less imitative than that existing today and derived rather from the "functional" necessities of the situation. At present the significance of the suburbs is sociological in the broad sense rather than, in any positive way, architectural. The houses of the past decade are probably better built and have more conveniences than those

<sup>45</sup> See *Regional Survey of New York and Its Environs*, Volume VII, "Neighborhood and Community Planning," pp. 254 ff., New York, 1929.

inhabited by the same economic group in any preceding period. They have not, collectively, the integrity of an old English, French or German village because they represent a life and consequently an allegiance that is divided between city and country and is not wholly adjusted to either. The commuters who inhabit them are obviously products of social conditions which are not yet stabilized; and the houses reflect this lack of stability.

Certain regional influences have already been mentioned as revealing themselves in home building, particularly in the South and West. The "Mediterranean" type of house may be encountered from Florida to California. This style was developed in a region with a climate somewhat similar to that of the southern United States, though with history and traditions quite different. It was originally introduced into the country by Spanish builders, directly or by way of Mexico, with an Italian influence coming in later. In Louisiana there is an additional French element. The balconies and wrought-iron, the archways and courts of old New Orleans, the adobes of San Antonio and old Santa Barbara and Monterey, the half Spanish, half Indian houses of Santa Fe, were all produced by builders working in an idiom natural to them and seeming to them well suited to their adopted country. The styles which they followed were later superseded by a species of frame house which spread over the whole United States, in various forms, after the Civil War. Modern architects are now returning to the earlier models, supplementing them with a study of the sources and adapting them to new conditions.

The most conspicuous result of this evolution—unless we except the Pueblo type houses of Santa Fe, which geographically are narrowly limited—is the so-called "California style." "Here," as Mr. Cheney puts it,<sup>46</sup> "is a development that is important to us not by reason of a sudden revolutionary overturn, not by the emergence of an unaccountable genius among architectural plodders; rather, a slow-moving body of architects, thoroughly respectable and recognized, gradually settles down to one historical style, the Spanish and its Colonial approximations, as a 'source,' slowly rationalizes that in accordance with climatic conditions, available materials and modern use-demands, and in the end shows forth to the world a body of work only very faintly flavored with his-

<sup>46</sup> In *The New World Architecture*, *op. cit.* pp. 268-270.

torical idioms and allusions, and very admirably serving the purposes of today's mechanistic living."

Like Wright's prairie houses the new California house in its best examples is made to harmonize with the contours and sometimes even with the textures of the natural scenery in which it is set. It is well adapted to a climate in which there is much sunshine and outdoor life is possible the year round. For the same reason it is distinctly regional. Motives of economy will probably always operate to give the two-story house, which is relatively easy to heat, an advantage in the North and East over the one-story villa or bungalow. But the emergence of any style, even a regional one, is certainly a matter of architectural significance.

An interesting idea of the extent to which home building can be standardized is furnished by the catalogue of a well known Chicago mail order house which describes itself as "the world's largest builders of fine homes." One does not look in such a catalogue for evidences of originality, but rather for designs which have already found favor. It is, in a way, a kind of barometer of public taste. The illustrations call up not one suburb or one region but a hundred suburbs which one may have seen in every part of the United States. "You will find," as the announcement puts it, "attractive bungalows, modernized English one- and two-story types, dignified Dutch colonials and many other types of architecture." The houses are variously described as "Americanized English style," "a modernized example of colonial architecture," "a two-story English cottage type," "as smart, sophisticated and beautifully appointed as a luxurious small motor car," "Swiss roofed bungalow," and so on. Some appeal is made to non-utilitarian features—"interesting roof lines," "pleasing perspective from every angle," "romantic charm and appeal," "quaint design" and "simplicity."

Such a catalogue would probably not have been issued a few years ago—and, indeed, was not issued. The appeal is not to the motive of economy alone, though that is emphasized, but to a real, however ill informed, desire for aesthetic quality. Perhaps there are purchasers for these homes who would not have realized a decade or two decades ago that design in a house meant anything more than comfort and convenience on the one hand or an evidence of expenditure on the other. They now have a choice among



designs in which the aesthetic element is stressed, and though they may select poor ones they have an opportunity to select a simple and beautiful one. The same opportunity is, of course, open to those who buy standardized house plans and build their own homes. Magazines specializing in domestic architecture and interior decoration find a wide circulation, and competitions for home designs arouse a considerable amount of interest.

The average or typical small-home buyer cannot, of course, afford to experiment. He buys for long time use, perhaps for a lifetime, and he cannot discard an unsatisfactory house as he would an unsatisfactory suit of clothing. His tastes are inevitably to some degree standardized. Economically speaking, the style trend moves downward. An architectural experiment, expensive to make, may easily and cheaply be copied if it proves successful. And the copying of house designs, though not ideal from the point of view of those architects who believe that houses should suit the personalities of the individuals who are to live in them, is not in itself reprehensible. It is assumed, indeed, in the very word "style."

As the most satisfactory of the historic styles are accepted, modified and incorporated into the average man's home, constant experimentation goes on toward the production of new styles, sometimes of a bold and startling nature. Here, again, France, Holland and Germany seem to have led the way, but there have been many American adaptations and some original American creations. A small group of American architects have treated the dwelling house as a fresh problem, to be solved wholly in terms of modern conditions and materials, with no regard whatever for historic styles. The "functionalist house"—the "dwelling machine," to adopt one figure which has been applied to it—is designed as though a house were a new invention. The architect of a functionalist house is inclined to start with the necessary services and facilities—provision for light and ventilation, electricity and so forth—and to make the house itself a framework or envelope to sustain and contain these elements. He builds from the inside out rather than from the outside in. This theory may or may not accord with Wright's belief that "a building should appear to grow easily from its site" and be "shaped to harmonize with its surroundings." The two may, however, be reconciled.

So far "functionalist" architecture is, in the domestic field, a conception rather than an actuality. It has deserved mention here for the reason that it has received much attention in America, seems to be in line with certain American tendencies, and may have a considerable effect during the next decade or two. In April, 1931, a "house for contemporary life," designed by A. Lawrence Kocher and Albert Frey, and sponsored by a number of well known New York builders and supply firms, was exhibited at the Grand Central Palace in New York City. By way of illustrating the concept behind it a quotation from the prospectus is given.

"The 'Aluminaire' house," said the architects, "was designed to meet the needs of present day life—the life of the near city. It is so devised as to give house-dwellers better light and air with mechanical conveniences and efficiency of arrangement that are unheard of features in the average suburban dwelling. The life of today for the city worker requires a different setting than for the existence of the early American under pioneer conditions. It is only fair to say that the colonial house served its purpose well for the period when it was created, but it is an anachronism to give the city worker the same house that served totally different needs.

"That the house has not changed to keep in step with advances in mechanical fields has, perhaps, been due to aesthetic prejudices and a downright conservatism fostered by an overemphasized regard for the antique. The house at Grand Central Palace is a startling innovation, built with an extremely light framework of metal—with a manner of construction that is suited to standardization with its many economic advantages. (In the past, progress toward standardization has not been possible with the traditional stone and brick construction). The materials used in the house, such as light metals and synthetic products, have already proved their worth in other technical fields, but their combination in a different manner for the improved and simplified building is totally new.

"The outside walls are faced with aluminum, a material that is weather-resistant. It is in the form of sheets slightly ribbed to break glare, and to care for expansion and contraction in varying temperatures. It also has more stiffness than flat sheets and lends itself to ease of joining. This aluminum is backed with insulation that makes its three-inch wall more effective in excluding heat and

cold than the customary heavy masonry. Windows of ultra-violet glass extend the entire width of rooms to make them as well lighted as the sun porch. At the same time, privacy is maintained by shades."

The house presented externally the appearance of a cube, with its plain aluminum surfaces broken by the extensive use of glass and open porch spaces. Its aesthetic qualities are as hard to judge as those of a cubistic painting. At first sight it probably was not attractive to spectators accustomed to "Dutch Colonial" or "Americanized English." But a certain amount of discretion is necessary in dealing with domestic architecture. Only those rigidly trained in aesthetic standards can judge a house solely as architecture, so closely is it associated with early experiences and with the traditional idea of home as a refuge. Modern civilization has two aspects, as yet imperfectly reconciled—the workaday, which is dominated by machinery, and the traditional, which has its roots deep in the handicraft psychology of the past. Handicraft conceptions have obviously lingered in the home longer than anywhere else. The shiny and efficient factory-like home, with its metallic surfaces, its severe economy of space and its banishment of much that was implied in the original use of the word homely, will possibly be slow in making its way. But it may be observed that apartment designers, out of sheer necessity, have already taken long steps toward the mechanical and the modernistic; and the effect is being felt in the small home.

One variety of domestic architecture, the country house, remains to be discussed. The expression has come to mean definitely the rural mansions of the well to do and these in times past have included some splendid examples. But the country life of the wealthy has altered with the general changes in their manner of living. Those who might have given particular attention to a country seat in years gone by may now have an elaborate city apartment and several other homes in different parts of the United States or even abroad. Interesting examples of country seat architecture may still be found, but they are likely to be restorations of old houses or new houses built in a more or less conventional style. Some tendencies toward greater utilization of local materials and the tasteful adaptation of house to landscape may be noted, but not much in the way of bold experimentation. On the other hand,

there seems much less desire for ostentation and more for comfort. Perhaps there is more ostentation the country over, nowadays, by persons of the same economic status, in motor cars than in houses—another phase of the national nomadism.

If the evidence offered in this chapter is reviewed it may be concluded that there has been an improvement in taste in all kinds of architecture, though the architectural millenium does not seem to have arrived. This suggestion is made with no accompanying attempt to define taste or to tell why one kind of taste is better than another, but on the authority of trustworthy professional students of the subject. Even though "good taste" in the modern sense may mean only that the principles contemporaneously recognized as good in other arts are now being applied to architecture, the phenomenon is still an important one. Architecture is at the threshold, manifestly of a plastic age. New forms are in process of being born. They will not certainly be better than the old ones; they may, however, express modern life as the older ones expressed the life of bygone days.

The change, as has been seen, is not far advanced, and is not affecting all kinds of architecture in equal degree. In general we live, go to school, conduct government and perform worship in buildings which outwardly would not have appeared very strange to our ancestors. We do some of our banking in Roman and Grecian temples, and we may have to pass through a replica of a Roman bath in order to take a train. But also, in general, we more and more conduct our businesses and operate our productive machinery in structures of a newer type. This seems to be the result rather of sheer practicality than of a consciously newaesthetic theory. The new technique of building was made to carry the burden of classical design and ornament until first the architects, then their clients, perceived the resulting incongruity. "Stripped architecture" arose from the elimination of elements no longer needed. The resulting lines and masses arose in turn from the necessities of modern construction engineering and modern uses of buildings. On those lines and masses the modern architect apparently has started to create a new style. A reading of the history of architecture does not lead one to believe that this new style will be permanently "stripped," but if and when it is elaborated the elaboration will probably not be a copy of anything

previously known. Regardless of personal preference, this is the architectural future we face. That the newer ideas will eventually affect all kinds of building cannot be doubted.

In the cities, at least, the public is evidently becoming acclimated to the new architectural ideas, just as it might become accustomed to extreme modernism in painting if all the largest and most conspicuous paintings were modernistic. The desire for novelty which is characteristic of the city dweller may have something to do with this. Certainly the modern skyscraper has had to run no such barrage of reactionary criticism as that encountered by the various revolutionary movements in painting during the nineteenth century. The vocal criticism has nearly all been based not upon the modernism of the skyscraper but on its frequent retention of archaic features.

When the first plans were announced for the gigantic project known as Rockefeller Center, designed to occupy three entire blocks of the west side of Fifth Avenue, Manhattan, an animated discussion in the press was focused on this very feature, and, apparently as a result of this discussion, the original designs were radically modified. The final plans, now being carried out, fail, naturally enough, to satisfy that school of critics which believes the skyscraper to be already obsolescent. But the fact that the element of aesthetic significance was placed first, even in a building enterprise which had to earn its own living, is important.

"Beauty, utility, dignity and service," reads the official description, "are to be combined in the completed project. Rockefeller Center is not Greek, but it suggests the balance of Greek architecture. It is not Babylonian, but it retains the flavor of Babylon's magnificence. It is not Roman, yet it has Rome's enduring qualities of mass and strength. Nor is it of the Taj-Mahal, which it resembles in mass composition, though in it has been caught the spirit of the Taj—aloof, generous in space, quieting in its serenity . . . The Taj, in tribute to pure beauty, was designed as a temple, a shrine. Rockefeller Center, conceived in the same spirit of aesthetic devotion, is designed to satisfy, in pattern and in service, the many-sided spirit of our civilization. By solving its own varied problems, by bringing beauty and business into closer companionship, it promises a significant contribution to the city planning of an unfolding future."<sup>47</sup>

<sup>47</sup> *Rockefeller Center*, published by Rockefeller Center, Inc., New York, 1932.

Behind any discussion of architecture there must be some theory of the probable development of American communities. A continuing concentration of wealth and population in great cities may give us the Babylonian masses of which Hugh Ferriss has dreamed—great towers and pinnacles, soaring to heights as yet unattempted, streets double-decked or triple-decked, gardens and promenades in the sky, tunnels below tunnels in the earth. Le Corbusier has prophesied a spacious city whose great mountains of buildings will be set off by streets and open spaces of corresponding dimensions. The Committee on Regional Plan of New York and Its Environs has laid down the principle that there should be a ratio between open space and built-on space and between high buildings and the spaces around them that will preserve and enhance the civilized amenities. The advocates of the centralized and of the decentralized city have locked horns. We do not know which will prevail, though we may look to more rapid means of transportation, especially by air, to spread out rather than concentrate population.

The great variety of uses to which buildings may be put is likely to ensure as much opportunity as our architects can use. The monumental structure, often put up frankly for advertising purposes, and the single private dwelling, promise to remain parts of the architectural picture in any discernable future. Thus architecture is not only America's most distinctive contribution to the arts, but bids fair to become increasingly so.

## CHAPTER VIII

### PAINTING AND SCULPTURE:

#### THE NEW EXPRESSION

**I**N A preceding chapter the evolution of painting and sculpture in America was briefly indicated, and the conclusion was reached that in these departments of the arts the distinctively American note had not yet been struck. This point may well be considered in a little more detail, and in contrast not only to the status of architecture, just discussed, but to that of the commercial and industrial arts, which will be taken up next. In this chapter painting and sculpture will be thought of as "fine arts," divorced from their more practical applications.

In trying to determine to what extent America is already expressing itself in these fields we at once encounter difficulties, for very little evidence that would hold in a court of law or in a treatise on sociology is available. It would be easy to draw up a list of well known American artists who are recognized as conservative and another list who are admittedly modern or "modernist," but because the meanings of these terms are continually changing we could not compare them significantly with similar lists of artists who were active ten, twenty or thirty years ago. Probably the proportions of conservatives, liberals and radicals in the arts, as in human affairs generally, remain about the same from generation to generation. At the same time it must be recognized that at a given time any one of these groups may be in the ascendancy. In other words, there are classical and there are romantic periods, and there are transitional periods between the two. The present period is undoubtedly not classical, although it has few points in common with the romanticism of a century ago. This is true whether we think in national or in international terms. All that is important for the purposes of the present discussion, however, is to make clear what the international movements in the arts are and what part, if any, America is playing in them. In trying to answer this question it is necessary to rely largely upon the

authority of current criticism, offering such criticism purely as a variety of source material.

Perhaps the first characteristic of radical painting and sculpture, in this country as in Europe, is that it has discarded as an objective the accurate representation of nature. As the French painter, Matisse, has put it: "By mechanical means an image is now fixed on a photographic plate in a few seconds—an image more precise and exact than it is humanly possible to draw—and so with the advent of photography disappeared the necessity for exact reproduction in art." About a generation was required for this discovery to influence the more advanced artists, and the opinion may be hazarded that at the end of a century it still awaits popular acceptance.

"It is profoundly unfortunate," says Oliver M. Sayler,<sup>48</sup> "that the average American today is unable to grasp and assimilate the works of the modern French masters and those of our own artists who have been inspired by that extraordinary outpouring of interpretive genius, for we are in the presence here of painting especially, and sculpture to a lesser degree, as genuine prophecy, as Great Interpreter, fulfilling as nothing since Giotto the role of the philosopher . . . But, thanks to the hold of a traditional idea, we shall probably have to wait for our children or our children's children to enter and roam this fertile and soul-stirring field with abandon and rejoicing."

John Sloan, a contributor to Mr. Sayler's symposium, is more optimistic: "The general trend of the time, while not of the best for the utilization of our painters," he tells us, "has elements of hope for the future. In fact, it may not be too much to say that we are about to do our share. We are the great unspanked baby of the world. We will become adult. When we do, we will use our artists. They will be on hand. To be without interest in painting is to be without contact with about one fourth of the means of spiritual communication. The American people will find that they need pictures."

To a sculptor, Mahonri Young, as eminent in his own field as is Mr. Sloan in that of painting, "there is nothing new and all

<sup>48</sup> In *Revolt in the Arts: A Study of the Creation, Distribution and Appreciation of Art in America*, by Oliver M. Sayler, with contributions by thirty representative authorities in the several arts, New York, 1930.



our own in the modernistic development of sculpture in Machine Age America." Mr. Young goes on to say: "What has come out of America has been a reflex of the development in Europe. It seems that we have to get our inspiration from Europe, no matter what we originate here . . . What is the future of sculpture in America? Who knows? With patronage everything is possible. In public works all depends on the person in charge at the moment. In private life there will always be a few people who care enough to pay the artist to cast more than one small bronze. Here in America we can have anything if we want it eagerly enough. There is plenty of talent. We have had geniuses and great talents in sculpture in America. But the architect is the one who holds the key. It is up to him to provide the opportunity."

(In short, to sum up these quotations, modernism in painting and sculpture is an exotic plant which can be grown in American gardens, but so far has not been so grown in any large way. It may be that our early landscape painters came closer to producing something which, whatever its virtues or defects, was distinctively American than do those who now follow "the modern French masters"; and it may be that the feeling that this product is not distinctively American has something to do with its failure to find popular acceptance. This may be said, of course, without prejudice to the question of whether or not art ought to be or can be nationalistic.

Miss La Follette has written interestingly of this phase of the subject. "One hears frequent complaints, especially since the overstimulation of patriotic sentiment during the War," she writes,<sup>49</sup> "that American art is not sufficiently American, and that the artists must cut off from European influences if they wish to develop a national art . . . So far as art is concerned, America is not a political unit, but a geographical and spiritual environment. The artist brought up in that environment will show its influence in his work without having to try—in spite of himself, indeed—no matter how much he learns from foreign schools. The question of a national art, then, will take care of itself. The concern of the artist is with the fullest development of his own power of expression. If the art of another people—whether the works of the

<sup>49</sup> In *Art in America*, *op. cit.*

French cubists, the Maya sculptors, or the African wood-carvers, helps him to develop this power, so much the better . . . One might spend much time arguing the absurdity of the idea that art is dead; but it is hardly necessary, in view of the remarkable vitality displayed by the modern movement in all of its aspects—architecture, painting, sculpture and the industrial arts—both in America and in Europe. Whether America will in the near future take the lead in this movement is another question. With all that has been achieved here, with all the talent that unquestionably exists, with all the wealth, it has not yet done so. Whether it will do so in future is likely, it seems to me, to depend much less upon individual artists than upon the direction in the development of the collective life. The want of a sound culture had had the unfortunate result of making a chronic adolescence the outstanding feature of our civilization; and a great art is the product of maturity, not of adolescence. This country has the wealth necessary for a great art; it has the vitality. If it attains maturity in time, there may indeed await it one of those moments of equilibrium between the forces of civilization and those of destruction—which are perpetually at war within the social organism—in which great art is born.”

Miss Katherine Dreier dates the modernist movement in the United States from the incorporation of the “Société Anonyme, Museum of Modern Art,” in New York, in 1920, “to promote the serious study of these various new expressions in art and to hold regular exhibitions.” The point of view of this group is perhaps expressed in Miss Dreier’s words: “Free the artist from the trammels of the past. Demand that he express the spirit of the people of today, their love of power and speed, the spirit of freedom as well as the spirit of slavery. The desire to cover distances, as expressed through electricity and the wireless vibration of the air. Let him express the new, not the old. Let him reveal that this love of conquering distances may mean a coming together of all the peoples of the world, a greater brotherhood of man or greater slavery—which? Demand that our time be expressed. And if you, as the people, demand it, the artist will respond. Then a new art representing a new era will be born in America that day.”<sup>50</sup>

<sup>50</sup> In *Western Art and the New Era*, New York, 1923.

Just how "a greater brotherhood of man" or a "love of conquering distances" may be revealed in an art which tends toward the abstract and the esoteric the reader must decide for himself. But the new in art should, of course, be judged by its products and not by the haziness with which its ideas are sometimes put into words.

"Art" in this context almost invariably means painting and sculpture, and almost never does it signify commercial art. Thus, though the "art" itself may be a "new expression," the conception of the artist which it takes for granted is a traditional one. He is thought of as an extreme individualist, producing for his own satisfaction, without thought of pecuniary gain. Economically, he is in the position of the artists of the Renaissance or earlier, who depended on patrons for support. He does not create to meet the demands of a market, as commercial artists do, though he is human enough to be glad of a market when his work is done. Throughout every discussion of his problems by sympathetic critics there runs the implication that he is neglected and misunderstood, and that this neglect and misunderstanding reflects adversely upon the cultural attainments of his countrymen. Thus the artist, or his spokesman, both ignores the public and craves its approval. The situation cannot be paralleled in any purely economic activity.

Is this situation a transitional phase? Does it arise in part from the present chaos in the "fine" arts, and the dissensions among the artists themselves? Is the American public gradually being converted to the new in art and is this conversion, if taking place, adding to the number of those who are interested in pure painting and sculpture?

These questions cannot be conclusively answered, because they involve too large a subjective element. The proportion of our total population which goes to exhibitions to see modern American art, or modern art of any kind, labelled and segregated as such, is certainly small. When the Museum of Modern Art opened in New York city in 1929 with a loan exhibition of "Painting in Paris" attendance reached a total of 35,000 in three weeks. This showed interest, unquestionably, among the art-conscious population of New York and its environs. Yet it meant that less than one per cent of the adult and able bodied population of the metropolitan area saw the show. Other illustrations of successful exhibitions of

contemporary art tell the same story. Those who attend them are an infinitesimal minority, though doubtless also an influential one.

Friends of the modern movement believe that the attitude of this "public" is growing more friendly. "It is clear," states Duncan Phillips,<sup>51</sup> "that the public is fascinated by the contemporaneous and controversial in art. The curiosity of the mob which packed the celebrated Armory Show in 1913 was an entirely different manifestation . . . The fact is undeniable that the average visitor to a public view of the so-called modern pictures in New York today is no stranger to the latest of aesthetic idioms . . . It appears that the American patron of art will soon require what he calls the 'modern note' and will actually feel compelled to disapprove of whatever does not conform to it . . . It may not be long now before the multitude, in our largest centers of culture, at least, will make virtue of their radicalism in art . . . Only a short time ago I feared that the majority were being alienated by the very uncompromising abstractions and eccentric cerebrations of very prominent artists and I predicted that a highly sophisticated class of period-conscious patrons might easily monopolize and dominate progressive artists and widen the gulf between art and the general public. I had not reckoned with the fame and fascination of the much-adored heroes of the movement. Nor had I reflected on the rapidity with which new ideas spread and grow when the soil has been prepared over a wide area."

In stressing the effects of the new in the fine arts one must bear in mind that it covers a large field, that its different schools are at war among themselves, and that it must of necessity contain much that is trivial, eccentric and temporary. It is not always easy to distinguish a trend from a style. A vogue of a certain kind of painting may not be of any more importance than a vogue of large or small hats for women. But the new movements are always "news," as any reader of art criticism in the metropolitan press quickly discovers; and as news they probably have the effect of adding to the number of those who go to exhibitions. No contemporary group of painters, sculptors or critics denies the fact of change and motion in the arts. The issue between the conservatives and

<sup>51</sup> In *Art and Understanding*, March, 1930.

the radicals, between the "Academicians" and the "rebels," is not whether there shall be change but how rapid and of what kind this change shall be, and what continuity or lack of continuity there will be between it and the great traditions of the past. For the present discussion the important fact is that the issue exists and that it reveals the arts, if for no other reason than their ability to inspire controversy, as being very much alive.

Yet, when all has been said and all allowances made, it must be admitted that for the overwhelming majority of the American people the fine arts of painting and sculpture, in their non-commercial, non-industrial forms, do not exist. Sociologically they are not an important phenomenon. The radio and the motion picture so far out-shadow them in the number of their patrons that no comparison is possible. Their clientele is indeed growing: compare the 35,000 persons who attended the Parisian exhibition of the Museum of Modern Art in 1929 with the 200, over 150 of whom were writers and artists, who, as Juliana Force states, attended an exhibition of the works of Thomas Eakins at the Whitney Galleries less than two decades earlier. The growth in attendance at museums and exhibitions, as has been seen in an earlier chapter, has been striking. But still the number of those who are keenly and intelligently interested in the newer movements in modern art remains comparatively very small.

If the story ended here it would be a mere detail in any panoramic view of American culture. Its implications, of course, are much more extensive than any mere counting of noses would imply. Sculpture has its place not as the rare product of a small group of artists exhibited in infrequent "shows," but as an integral part of architecture. A building is itself, in a sense, a huge sculpture. Painting is not confined to canvases to be hung upon the walls of museums, sales rooms or mansions of private collectors. Seen by the few in the form of "fine art" it influences the many through its effect upon commercial and industrial design. The public which never makes the rounds of the galleries is constantly exposed, perhaps without realizing it, to the modern and even the modernistic ideas in art.

The next two chapters will be an inquiry into the manner in which this influence acts. The point may be made here that though the "fine arts" are admittedly still under a strong foreign influence

there is much in advertising and in commercial design which is as thoroughly American as the skyscraper itself—which is, as Miss La Follete says, a result of the influence of a “geographical and spiritual environment.” It may seem a far cry from Picasso to a design for a dress silk or a suite of furniture, yet it is by no means certain that the connection does not exist.

## CHAPTER IX

### ART AND BUSINESS: ADVERTISING

**I**F THERE is one department of economic life in which American achievement is generally recognized as noteworthy it is that of salesmanship; and if there is one phase of salesmanship which has been highly developed by Americans it is that of advertising. In examining the role which the arts play in advertising we are not only breaking away entirely from even the fringes of "art for art's sake" but are entering upon a field governed by sternly practical conditions. If we find art in advertising it is because it "pays"; and if good art in advertising pays it must be because the ultimate consumer prefers good art to bad art.

It is, of course, impossible to measure the amount of good advertising art against the amount of bad advertising art. It is, however, possible to find out something as to the seriousness with which advertisers and advertising agencies weigh aesthetic considerations, and even, to some extent, to measure that seriousness. We need not go so far as to compare the role of business as a patron of the arts with that of the church in medieval times, though that comparison has often been made. Ecclesiastical art probably contained an element which today would be defined as advertising, but its most important content was an immaterial thing which had nothing to do with goods for sale. But no doubt in each case it has been the ultimate consumer who determined what kinds of art should prevail; and in our own day we do get close to the standards of the ultimate consumer by finding out what kinds of advertising he most readily responds to.

Advertising itself is certainly not new, for examples of it may be found as early as the days of the Roman Empire. In the United States it began with the town crier and made its way into the earliest newspapers. As an art, however, or even as a skilled trade, it was held back for many years by the limitations of the printing press and of the printing processes in general. Not until fairly recent times could newspapers and magazines reproduce with

fidelity the kind of advertising design and layout we are familiar with today. Mr. Abbott Kimball places the advent of the modern type of advertising as late as 1920. After tracing the contributions of the inventor, the engineer and the travelling salesman to America's development he goes on to say:<sup>52</sup> "I think, after the travelling salesman, you will find that the advertising man was the next great factor in the development of the country. The advertising man showed the manufacturer how to distribute his merchandise; he showed him something about mass selling. We see the real national power of advertising around 1920, I would say. Before then, of course, we had advertising, but from 1920 to 1930 we saw a tremendous period of advertising development—larger space units, new standards in copy and in art."

The advertising man as an economic factor need not concern us here; the interest he has for us in the present connection is the manner in which he has used the arts and the results he has obtained by so using them. Advertising as a whole might be an economic liability and at the same time an aesthetic asset; or it might be an economic asset and an aesthetic liability. We shall not attempt to establish these relations, but shall merely endeavor to ascertain to what extent the aesthetic has consciously been introduced into advertising.

Advertising in printed form involves the elements of type design or lettering, layout and illustration. Type design, of course, affects all printing. It is of particular importance in advertising because of the variety of effects that advertising designers seek. The designing of type faces is an art that sprang into being almost full-grown at the time of the invention of printing, for the simple reason that the art of hand lettering had then reached a highly developed stage and that the first printers imitated hand lettering as closely as possible. Indeed, there is little doubt that some of the earliest printed books were sold as manuscript copies. Type designers, however, have done their quiet work ever since Caxton's day, and there have been a number of notable ones in recent times.

The most recent revival of interest in printing may be traced to William Morris and his Kelmscott Press. Toward the end of the nineteenth century a reaction set in against the monotony of

<sup>52</sup> In "Dollar and Cents Value of Beauty," Talk No. 6, March, 1931 (Pamphlet published by the Industrial Institute of the Art Center, New York City), pp. 7-8.



machine-made type in which legibility had been almost the sole objective. Three American printers have been pioneers in this field. Bruce Rogers, a native of Indiana, first worked on the art staff of an Indianapolis newspaper, then went to a commercial printing house, and in 1901 was put in charge of special editions at the Riverside Press of Houghton Mifflin and Company in Boston. It is stated that these editions were issued for many years at a loss, but were continued because the head of the publishing house had an enthusiasm for fine typography. In more recent times de luxe editions find an increasing clientele and are profitably sold. Mr. Rogers' work was considered so notable that it was collected by the British Museum in its entirety, and exhibited as illustrative of the printer's art. Frederic W. Goudy designed his first set of type, an alphabet in capital letters, while working as a bookkeeper in Chicago in 1896. It was promptly accepted by a type foundry and three years later he was able to devote his entire time to his art. His first important commission came from a brewery, which engaged him to make the type designs for its advertisements, and afterwards he had commissions from great department stores. Later he devoted himself to designing type faces to be set by machine. A third leader in the typographical art in the United States is D. B. Updike of the Merrymount Press, who has designed not only for printed books but for all kinds of "jobs."<sup>53</sup> The list of good type designers who have made a reputation in recent years could be extended. The significant fact in the present connection is that their work has been used not only in fine book printing but in commercial publications and advertisements.

From the Bartlett Orr Press of New York City we take a statement which indicates the conscious introduction of the aesthetic element into the policies of a large printing house.

"I think it may be said, briefly," writes Mr. E. E. Bartlett of the work of this press, "that whatever success we have made in a business way was due to the basic idea that beauty, when intelligently applied to a given subject, was a great advertising force that had never had a fair trial because of the non-existence of properly qualified organizations to handle completely any given piece of commercial literature, including the definite plan of a

<sup>53</sup> See "Three Great American Printers," by Walter Pritchard Eaton, *The Bookman*, August, 1924, from which the summary above has been largely drawn.

booklet, leaflet or catalogue, embracing the conception of the idea which involved the writing, the designing, the art work, the engraving and the printing . . . Among the industries that gave recognition to the asset of beauty were the electrical industry, the bicycle industry, followed soon by the earlier productions of the automobile manufacturers, manufacturers of silverware and jewelry, and, strange as it might seem, such prosaic industries as machine tools, engines and boilers, printing presses, stoves, ranges and house-heating apparatus, and many other kindred interests in a smaller degree."

An illustration of developments in one kind of advertising, the mail order catalogue, was obtained by examining four such catalogues sent out by one of the country's largest mail order houses between 1915 and 1930. In this case it is necessary to depend on individual taste and to give the impressions recorded not as final evidence but merely as the perspective of an observer at the beginning of the fourth decade of the century looking back at the second and third decades. The 1915 catalogue seemed to this observer to have a badly designed cover page, crowded pages throughout, bad press work and crude color designs. Aesthetic elements were not emphasized in the advertising, whereas convenience and economy were. Some improvement in cover design and color work was noted in 1920, but most of the cuts of that year seemed to have been carried over from 1915. By 1925 the cover design was fairly good, though conventional, the old illustrations had disappeared and color was more generally emphasized. In 1930 the cover was modernistic in treatment, there was a brief introduction stressing the quality of design as well as style in the goods offered, the note of color was prominent throughout, with many pages of really attractive design, and it seemed evident that some one had gone over the pages in proof and studied the effect of each one as a whole.

It should be remembered that these catalogues are intended for a clientele living largely on farms and in the smaller communities and without wide experience in aesthetic appreciation of a formal sort. More sophisticated constituencies are approached in a more formal manner. The mail order house makes a feature of a stove, which had notably ugly lines in early catalogues, but which in 1930 had been considerably improved and was advertised

as "America's most beautiful range." By way of contrast a New York jeweler at the same time was advertising a necklace priced at \$685,000, using for that purpose a black and white design of the utmost simplicity spread across two magazine pages.

Mr. Earnest Elmo Calkins of New York City has made a thoughtful analysis of "Advertising Art in the United States."<sup>54</sup> He notes that "the number of examples of good work" in advertising design has greatly increased since 1924; that the picture or design is now "not merely a detached work of art but an integral part of the page"; and that "credit for many of the best pages in the American magazines must be divided between the art director, the layout man and the artist." "This," he goes on to say, "has greatly broadened the use of art in advertising and has been the opportunity for an indefinite number of ingenuities. Instead of one picture and one block of text, pictures, frequently in color, have been scattered through the text, greatly brightening the effect and giving it a liveliness and a lightness in harmony with a high-keyed, rapidly-moving age. Thus advertising tends to express not only the goods offered but also the tempo, the spirit of the customers who buy them. The highest pitch of excellence in advertising art is reached in the magazine pages. We do not have in the United States any such poster work as is common in Europe, for several reasons . . . Our best work is not found on the billboards . . . but in the color pages which adorn the magazines and successfully compete in interest and attractiveness with the editorial features of the book. Black-and-white designing for newspaper use is improving . . .

"The use of color in magazines is increasing, spurred by the tremendous improvement in color printing adopted by magazine publishers, and by the obvious advantage that color gives to the advertiser, not merely for the realistic presentation of his goods, but more particularly as an eye catcher. The tendency toward high key color, interesting pattern produced by intelligent use of the goods themselves, has begun to characterize a great deal of the color

<sup>54</sup> In *Modern Publicity*, 1930, the seventh of a series of annuals, pp. 150 ff. It is interesting to note that this publication, which covers in text and illustrations the advertising art of the United States, Great Britain, France and Germany, was originally entitled *Posters and Publicity*, and that the present title was adopted in 1930 in recognition of the fact that it was "no longer possible to consider the poster as the only or even necessarily the main feature of progressive advertising."

advertising in the magazines. This tendency is often confused with modernism, and it is much used for modernistic design, but it is not what is technically known as modernism so much as it is an expression of contemporary life . . . Modernism, or what is conceived to be modernism, has profoundly influenced American advertising design in both the pictorial treatment and the typography. A good deal that is merely eccentric, the attempt to be different, is wrongly classed as modernism, but principally the movement is an effort to shake off the old realistic treatment which has reached such a dead level of excellence in still life painting as to render it difficult to give an advertisement by the old methods the distinction and individuality it should have."

It may be suggested here that styles in advertising are under greater pressure toward constant change than those in the more detached kinds of art. Advertisements in a magazine compete with the editorial and illustrative contents and with each other. The effort of the individual advertiser is to make his own space stand out, even though he has to startle the reader into noticing it. Boldness and originality are at a premium. At the same time the advertiser must adapt himself to the supposed tastes of the readers of the periodical in which his advertisements appear. Usually he cannot use the same material in a newspaper of wide circulation that he would use in a "class" publication reaching selected customers. Moreover, where the element of style enters into the qualities of the goods offered for sale, it is important that the advertisement itself should seem to be in the latest style, or, better still, in advance of the style.

It is difficult to resist quoting Mr. Calkins, who is at once a practical advertising man and a well known exponent of an advertising philosophy. "It is undoubtedly true," he continues, "that business design is today the greatest field for the artist . . . The man who paints a successful advertising picture is held to be as much of an artist as a man who paints a mural. There is no longer a gap between the business artist and the art artist. They are both the same artist . . . The younger men have grown up in the tradition of business art. They have learned that they can accept it without sacrifice of artistic ideals, but that it is a technical field which requires study and approach for the proper application of artistic ability, exactly as architecture and mural painting. The

men who are furnishing the best art to advertising are also painters of pictures for their own satisfaction, which are exhibited in galleries exactly as were those of the old academic school of artists . . . The man who works in advertising design is no longer entirely at the mercy of the business man whose criticisms once paralyzed all his sources of inspiration. Even when the advertiser is not equipped to judge art work he has a growing appreciation of the powerful part art can play in advertising his business, and more and more these arbiters of destiny are beginning to get a glimmering of art principles.

“But more than that there stands today between the artist and the advertiser the art director who is a competent judge of art work from the point of view of the artist, and at the same time has a vivid understanding of the part the art work must play in the advertisement. He is able by his sympathy, knowledge and diplomacy to bring about a welding of the two, the advertiser’s aims and desires—the artist’s ability and integrity. The result is that as much sincere, able inspired work is being put into advertising design today as in any other form of art.

“As has been said before, this doesn’t mean that all advertising art is good. The greater proportion of it is still ordinary and commonplace. Only a few in the vanguard are using it intelligently, and to the full capacity of the artist, but each year shows that good designing is more effective than bad in selling goods. More and more advertisers come to this point of view. The Harvard Awards pay especial attention and give special recognition to physical appearance in advertising. The Art Directors’ annual exhibition finds increasing difficulty in selecting 350 designs from several thousand that are good enough for display on their walls.”

The reader may himself decide what weight should be given to this testimony of a member of a successful advertising agency, and what allowances should be made for it. A “welding” of “the advertiser’s aims and desires” with “the artist’s ability and integrity” must usually involve a degree of compromise on either side. The artist is certainly not entirely free, though he may be just as free as were the artists who worked for the Medici, the medieval Popes or even the city fathers of ancient Athens. The advertiser engaged in a competitive business cannot be expected to put art ahead of profit where, actually or in his opinion, the two are at

variance. It is apparent, however, that the advertising agent nowadays feels himself on sound footing, even from the standpoint of the ledger, when he urges aesthetic considerations upon his client. Whether Mr. Calkin's estimate of advertising art is too generous is a matter of opinion. Young art students, as a rule, as has been indicated in a previous chapter, are inclined to favor the "fine" arts and to take up the "applied" arts only as a means of earning a living. The artist's defence of advertising art may be the rationalization of a necessity. None the less it is indisputable that "art" has become a "talking point" with the men who make and place American advertisements, and that this development is of very recent origin.

The advertising artist is almost a new phenomenon, though he may not be as remote as at first appears from the painters and sculptors of the Renaissance who bargained with the secular and spiritual princes of Florence, Rome, and Venice. He has, at least, escaped altogether from the isolation of the "fine" artist of a generation or more ago. He is part of the stream of current events. For good or ill he has become one of those major influences which dominate our lives and both fashion our tastes and are fashioned by them. As one rather cynical critic, Mr. M. F. Agha, has put it:<sup>55</sup> "The work of innumerable asymmetric layout men, of scores of photographers with cock-eyed perspective, and of the artists who know all about whirling squares, is accepted by the masses without any apparent revolt—and this in itself is a great accomplishment." It is probably true that the "masses" are to some extent prepared for what they see or might see at modern art exhibitions by what they cannot help seeing in the advertising pages of the magazines—and even of the newspapers.

The variety of the modern advertisement is apparent even to the most casual observer; less obvious, yet discernible, is the national character in them which makes it fairly easy to distinguish the German from the French, the continental from the British, and the American from any of the others. The advertisement may be a drawing or photograph of a product, and the drawing—or even the photograph—may be either realistic or merely suggestive; on the other hand, it may be symbolic, as when an artist attempts to "give an impression of a corporation's capacity for

<sup>55</sup> In *Annual of American Design, 1931*, New York, p. 140.

vision" by means of a silhouetted figure against the sky; it may appeal to the appetite, as is usually done in advertisements of food products; it may be an abstract design or a design using the product with little regard for realism; it may be beautiful, quaint or eccentric; often, by means of the glorified feminine form or luxurious surroundings, it will carry the "class" or so-called "snob" appeal.

The language of advertising forbids pessimism or the starker kind of realism, since these are qualities few consumers wish to spend money for. To that extent it probably cannot form a free vehicle of expression for a creative artist. The deeper phases of human existence can seldom be touched upon. The selling of the advertiser's goods, in any competitive economy, must always be more important than the liberation of the artist's spirit. But within these limitations art in advertising remains clearly an educational influence of increasing significance. The fact that millions are exposed to advertising as compared with the thousands who go to art exhibitions, and that the millions are greatly influenced thereby in their ways of life, is unescapable. Not long ago a nationwide and utterly unforeseen demand for small black hats was traced to the advertisement of a cigarette company in which an attractive woman in a small black hat was pictured. Perhaps this effect was so easily produced because women were beginning to be tired of large red, white or blue hats. But advertising, by holding out attractive possibilities of change, doubtless has much to do with significant trends not only in hats but in many other of the appurtenances of daily life.

The development of advertising has been continuous and it is not easy to find landmarks. Comparisons of one year with another by means of magazine and newspaper files are illuminating but not easy to describe. Figures of volume do not tell the story for the present purposes, since there is no essential relationship between volume or cost on the one hand and artistic quality on the other. Perhaps the use of color may be taken as a significant index. The first advertisement in four colors appeared in 1899 in *Leslie's Weekly*, but for some reason the idea did not take hold until after the depression of 1920-1921. The *Saturday Evening Post*, which has done much to set advertising standards, published its first four-page insert of color advertisements in October, 1924,

and followed this up with twenty more pages in color before the end of the year. Between 1924 and 1929 color advertising made rapid progress both in the *Post* and in other magazines, and in the latter year the *Post* alone published 1,307 advertising pages in color. Since 1929 color advertising has fallen off somewhat in quantity because of the general drop in advertising following the depression, but has not declined relatively to advertising in general. The mere use of color is not, of course, an indication of a rise in aesthetic quality. It does, however, broaden the limits within which the advertising artist has to work and enables him to produce better results if he is otherwise qualified to do so.

Art in advertising is necessarily closely linked with art in commercial design, for there would be a fatal incongruity, even from the purely materialistic point of view, in employing an attractive advertisement to sell an unattractive article. This is clearly evident in the case of the automobile, which is almost invariably presented by means of a drawing or photograph of the actual machine and which is increasingly sold on its looks. When Mr. Ford brought out his new model in 1927 he declared: "The new Ford has exceptional beauty of line and color because beauty of line and color has come to be considered, and I think rightly, a necessity in a motor car today." So deep an impression did "beauty" seem to have made on the public that he even felt it necessary to remind intending purchasers that a car must have more than good looks: "Equally important is the mechanical beauty of the engine. Let us not forget this mechanical beauty when we consider the beauty of the new Ford." This is a far cry indeed from the day when "the mechanical beauty of the engine" was all that purchasers looked for or expected in a motor car; and when Mr. Ford was perfectly satisfied with a car "with the lines of a kitchen pump, a transmission system out of date, no grace, no style, no less than fifteen million reproductions on the road, and no more individuality than a carpet tack."<sup>56</sup>

<sup>56</sup> Charles Merz, *And Then Came Ford*, New York, 1929, p. 291.



## CHAPTER X

### ART AND BUSINESS: COMMERCIAL DESIGN

THE quotation in the final paragraph of the last chapter was published in one of Mr. Ford's advertisements in 1927; it was part of a series of advertisements for which Mr. Ford paid \$15,000,000; and it was startling because Mr. Ford had been quoted a few years earlier as saying that he would not "give five cents for all the art the world has produced." His change of opinion may have been in part that which can come to any man who becomes more liberal as he grows older. Mr. Ford's son, Edsel Ford, has become sufficiently interested in art to assume a place as head of the governing board of the Detroit Institute of Arts, where Mr. Ford the elder is not an entire stranger. Moreover, Mr. Ford's well known interest in preserving old American songs, dances and historical houses and relics has a certain relationship with the arts.

But there was also a plain economic motive in the substitution of the Ford Model A for the old Ford Model T. The public had shown a growing preference for cars which in addition to being efficient were good to look at. This may have been one of the results of advertising campaigns carried on by manufacturers who were being forced by the increasing productivity of their plants to expand their markets. "So rapidly were fashions changing," writes Mr. Charles Merz of the year 1926, "so regularly were new fads arriving, and so distracted was the modern merchant, trying to keep pace with his supply on one end and his market on the other, that trade conventions spent hours deliberating what was now in style, and courses in fashion changes made their appearance in the curriculums of training schools and colleges. Radio sets went Florentine one year, only to go Louis Quinze the next, and Jacobean twelve months later. Styles in furniture, styles in diets, styles in wall paper and styles in floor coverings varied with the seasons. New cigarettes, new shaving creams and new laundry

soaps appeared from nowhere, covered the billboards with their claims, and wrote their virtues in airplane smoke against the heavens. Zipper galoshes, lizard-skin shoes, Russian boots, and Helen Wills eyeshades scored new triumphs in the market.

"Color made its appearance as the handmaid of industry. Linoleum dropped its prim triangles for the rich lustre of a Turkish rug. Bed linens went all colors of the rainbow . . . Mean-time motor cars themselves had fallen into line, for the invention of pyroxylin finishes had changed the raiment of the fashionable car from dark blue or black to hues as delicate as the pale tint of an Easter egg or as ruddy as a sunset . . . Fifty new shades for automobile bodies made their debut at the Motor Show in 1926. Florentine cream and Versailles violet decorated models which had borrowed their styles from the best architecture of the ages . . . Style set the pace for American production, and from Egypt and the Greeks to Moscow and modern art every possibility was explored for ideas that would start new fads or set new fashions. Committees on style took their place with committees on sales methods and production costs in great industrial establishments like the General Electric. Experts on style in the Bureau of Standards of the Federal Government compiled data on the changing modes . . . Household goods that had been traditionally commonplace for generations blossomed out as objets d'art. Dishpans suddenly appeared in mauves and yellows . . . Bathrooms went Renaissance and Pompeian, with ornamental basins, mirrored tubs and inlaid tiles to match the color of the walls."<sup>57</sup>

This is a somewhat satirical description of a development which is still going on and which, whatever one may think of some of its products, offers as many opportunities for good taste as for bad. In Mr. Ford's case he had found himself confronted with competition from a rival maker of inexpensive cars who had given them attractive designs and colors and was outstripping the Ford Company in sales. The differences in the mechanical performances of the two types of cars may not have been great, and at any rate are not pertinent here. The looks of the cars had become a point of competition. The motives behind the public's attitude toward aesthetic quality in motor cars may have been complex. When the development of engines had reached a certain stage the automobile

<sup>57</sup> *And Then Came Ford*, op. cit.

made by mass production methods was almost as good for the average man's practical purposes as the "custom built" car. It was natural that much attention should then begin to be given by makers of expensive cars to line and color.

At the same time women, whose preoccupation with dress had made them students of line and color, began to drive in greater numbers and to be influential in purchasing cars. Just as the gowns of exclusive Parisian designers are quickly imitated by ready-to-wear manufacturers the more expensive cars were imitated by the makers of cheaper cars. The buyers of these good looking cheap cars may have been searching for prestige rather than for "art." Whatever their motives, however, they did acquire cars whose lines and colors were more in keeping with recognized conceptions of good design than the older models had been.

The same trend, as Mr. Merz points out, may be noticed in the attention given in recent years to the design of a great variety of articles intended for general use. Experiments have shown that prestige is not the only object of the purchasers of such goods—indeed, there can be little prestige in possessing a well-designed package of breakfast food rather than an ugly package of the same food value. One department store which has given much attention to styling tested its patrons' aesthetic sensibilities not long ago by putting on sale a line of goods in which the design was purposely pulled out of what was judged to be correct proportion. The price was the same as that charged for goods of similar grade but of what was considered to be better design. The badly designed goods did not sell. The majority of the customers instinctively, as it seemed, turned away from them.<sup>58</sup>

That this sort of experience should be regarded as a notable thing is probably due to the fact that in remembering the century and a half of the industrial era we have tended to forget the many centuries of handicraft which went before. If art is worth studying at all it is because it is, or may be, a well-nigh universal experience. The art and handicraft of nearly all primitive peoples and of most of mankind prior to the invention of the steam engine indicate that it may be. The immediate effect of machine production was to halt the development of design, but it is probable in the light of

<sup>58</sup> This information was given in confidence. The authors have, however, satisfied themselves of its authenticity.

what evidence we have—and specifically of the evidence of the past few years in America—that this was but a temporary symptom.<sup>59</sup>

Power driven machinery, though it seemed to be a new thing in the world, was actually only an extension of the hand tool. It differed from the hand tool, and from such ancient machines as the potter's wheel, chiefly in the fact that it could make cheap and accurate reproductions. There was, and is, nothing inherent in the machine to cause it to reproduce bad designs. It could reproduce good ones with the same fidelity. But the psychological effect of machinery in many cases was to encourage the imitation, necessarily imperfect, of the old handicraft designs. In this the machine failed because, while the handicraft worker could not make two articles exactly alike, the machine, once set to a given task, turned out articles far more nearly identical than the proverbial peas in a pod. A handicraft product was necessarily unique, and the early designers of machine goods often attempted the absurdity of multiplying this uniqueness by the hundreds or thousands. Or they went to the opposite extreme and turned out objects which frankly made no pretence to any design other than was necessary to ensure their usefulness. Thus some machine made articles were faked and some were ugly but honest.

The last generation, and particularly the period since the end of the World War, has seen a change in this situation. "Out of the very general tendency in favor of the recovery of art in business," says Mr. Richard F. Bach, "has grown a considerable number of smaller producing groups that may be called the craftsmen of today. These work chiefly on special items, generally unique pieces or unified installations, such as the metal for a bank, the furniture for a club, the tiles for a church, the lighting for a railway station. Such work is often done in close association with the architect of the building, if not actually from his designs. The important consideration is that these workshops rely upon a specialized organization and upon every modern mechanical expedient they can afford, and that they can use [them] without detracting from the individuality which is the chief asset of their work. Usually a designer is the controlling officer of the group . . .

<sup>59</sup> For many of the ideas advanced in this chapter, including some not within quotation marks, the authors are indebted to a study made by Mr. Richard F. Bach, Director of the Department of Industrial Relations of the Metropolitan Museum of Art of New York City. Mr. Bach is not, however, responsible for all the conclusions drawn.

In these groups we find craftsmanship in its intimate surroundings, for, because of their small size, specialization of tasks cannot be carried far. That their results are regarded highly by quantity manufacturers and seem to respond to a broad area of appeal among the public is seen again in the fact that mass-producing companies repeatedly poach upon these preserves as a source of design . . .

"Shops of this kind favor no special field; the opportunities for special work are sufficiently numerous and varied to require their activities in metals, textiles, glass, clay products, woodwork and furniture, tapestry, plaster decoration, binding and printing and their attendant arts, not to mention certain crafts which have remained more consistent in their traditions because of their more limited market, such as stained glass, mosaics, certain types of wood and stone carving, embroidery and other types of work best represented in church architecture and decoration . . .

"Again there are a number of large-scale producers of quantity goods who maintain, in their own organizations, a department for special order work. Almost invariably in such cases, the quantity manufactured has been the outgrowth of the special order work. On the strength of the latter reputation and prestige have been built up . . . The prestige value of the special order work has as a rule been maintained at its own high level; instances may readily be cited in the fields of wall paper, velvet, tapestry, lighting fixtures, various metals, cotton printing, not to mention various aspects of the graphic arts."

In addition to these craft groups there are individual craftsmen, important in their influence it not in actual numbers or the monetary value of their products. In four cities—Boston, New York, Detroit and Philadelphia—there are societies of craftsmen with a total membership, in 1931, of 2,627. Considered as the producers of individual articles of merchandise these men and women cannot play a large part in the market; considered as the creators of designs which may be applied to the machine they may be most influential. But we have another type of craftsman or artist, who designs directly for the machine. He may draw for his ideas upon the material of his own generation or he may find inspiration in styles of other days. Since photographs and colored plates have brought the world's historic designs within the reach

of every one, the treasures of the past have been largely drawn upon for modern uses—to the detriment, as Mr. Bach thinks, of the development of self-expression.

But, Mr. Bach continues: "One real benefit has accrued from their use, namely, the more detailed and accurate knowledge now everywhere apparent of the forms of past styles. It may be assumed that this familiarity with the facts of other styles which have been tested by time may in the end function as a sound groundwork upon which to establish a style of our own. In fact, it may be stated with truth that the most successful designers today are also those who have thorough knowledge of the old styles, though they never practice them, and who continue to find inspirational as well as formal instruction in this type of source material." A national association of retailers of home furnishings not long ago endeavored to reduce to a system the different styles among their goods named after periods, persons or places; they produced a list of fifty-eight.

The factors of historic and of modern style are constantly at war in the market. Products in themselves modern, such as bathroom equipment and power driven household appliances, occasionally achieve a stark simplicity in keeping with that of some of the most modern architecture. But sometimes tradition is drawn on even here, as when a radio apparatus is enclosed in a cabinet borrowed from the French Renaissance. In silverware and china-ware, which are employed much as they have been for several generations, the classic modes are common. For many objects of common use, ranging all the way from the automobile to the canned goods container, there are no classic models because their originals did not exist a century or less ago. Perhaps the significant feature in the situation is not what kind of design trained commercial artists employ but the fact that such artists do, in increasing numbers, exist, and that they do design, according to such light as they have.

As Professor Charles R. Richards has said:<sup>60</sup> "The machine is becoming more and more a tool of artistic possibilities, because for the first time in its history it is being made to feel the demands of the consumer through economic pressure. These demands are

<sup>60</sup> Address at the Twenty-first Annual Convention of the American Federation of Arts, May 16th, 1930. (Reprinted in *The American Magazine of Art*, November, 1930.)

being transmitted largely through the department stores, which have become extremely sensitive to the quality of consumer demand. Through them the new demands have reached the producer, who by nature is the least sensitive member of the chain. This increasing power of the consumer is what is bringing to the manufacturer the demand for the styler and the talented designer. It is this situation that is increasingly forcing upon the machine the dual guidance of the artist and the technician that is so necessary for its full service to the community. When this comes about in full measure we may expect to obtain from the machine applied art that will rank artistically with the best from the craftsmen because it will possess first of all dignity and simplicity that come from honesty and straight-forwardness . . . The designer lost his high place when the industrial revolution occurred. The economic and social evolution that is taking place in these days gives strong promise of bringing him back to his essential place in industry."

In considering what is actually being done in design we can distinguish not only the conflict between the classical and the modern but also between two kinds of modernism. One of these is akin to the "modernistic" painting of a certain type—it is intended to be different and to startle. The other, like functionalist architecture, takes its form from its proposed uses. A well known artist was asked to re-design a set of scales. He achieved the result he desired by analyzing mechanically and structurally forty or more types of scales and the merits of his completed design lay in the elimination of all features, including working parts, which were not necessary to the perfect functioning of the apparatus. Another artist achieved renown by simplifying a canning company's cans and bottles. Still another introduced color into bath towels and eliminated the traditional border. Practicality, combined with enhanced aesthetic satisfaction, was the object sought in all three of these cases. The articles produced lent themselves readily to mass production.

To take another illustration suggested by Mr. E. Grosvenor Plowman, adviser on merchandising problems to the Associated Industries of Massachusetts, the railway locomotive, "a relatively good example of modern art," developed its satisfactory lines because of purely practical considerations. But today locomotive

manufacturers and their patrons are "considering the question of whether and how to style locomotives and trains." They have taken the work of the engineering designers and are proposing to supplement it with the work of artist-designers. Already we have entire trains "styled in ensemble fashion," supposedly for the reason that the public not only likes to reach its destination safely, comfortably and on time but derives pleasure from riding in trains and behind locomotives which please the eye.<sup>61</sup>

It is almost as difficult to make an ugly airplane as it is to make an ugly suspension bridge or was to make an ugly clipper ship. The lines and finish which promote safety and efficiency strike most of us as simple, strong and pleasing—certainly much more so than the awkward contraptions in which the Wright brothers made their first precarious flights. Occasionally we see airplanes used for purely decorative purposes in advertisements which have no direct connection with them, just as a designer of automobile bodies may illustrate his cars in juxtaposition with decorative women or dogs. But airplane lines have undoubtedly attracted both laymen and artists as a new effect in man-made machines; and it seems likely that the artist will be allowed to deal with them within the limits set by engineering necessity. Already there is a tendency to finish passenger planes in pleasing colors and in some of the more elaborate of them the interior decorator has obviously been at work. As yet, however, he has tended to pattern his interiors after those of the Pullman club car and has produced no style that seems distinctively to belong to a wholly new kind of travel. In short, the air transport companies are still competing on a basis of safety, comfort and speed. The time has not yet come when they will be obliged to compete also on the basis of the aesthetic attractiveness of their planes.

Thus, with some exceptions, the commercial designer is assuming a more important role in fields which he has long occupied; he is expanding his work to include new fields, and the indications are that as the area of what may be called aesthetic competition widens he will annex still more territory. He is becoming articulate and conscious of his purposes.

<sup>61</sup> See Mr. Plowman's discussion of this subject in "Fashion, Style and Art Spread to Other Lines of Business," General Management Series No. 106, a pamphlet published by the American Management Association, New York, 1929.



"If we can make an object," says Mr. Paul Thomas, advertising manager for a silk manufacturing company, "whether it be a lady's dress, or a pot, or a pan which goes into the kitchen, so that it be peculiarly more fitting for the purpose for which it was intended; if we can make it be either less obtrusive or more obtrusive in another sense; if we can get an extreme suitability, we have achieved a style that is sound, that has a basis in fact, and that really means something. This ignores, for the moment, the subject of beauty for beauty's sake—ornamentation or loveliness added beyond the practical quality of the product."<sup>62</sup>

Mr. Thomas points out that the requirements for many articles of common use have changed since Victorian times because manners and customs have changed—that we lie in chairs instead of sitting down in them and therefore need different kinds of chairs; that we do not eat so much or have so great a variety of foods at a single meal, and therefore do not need such a variety of silverware and table furnishings; that the introduction of twin beds has changed not only the style of bed but the styles of sheets and blankets; that the better lighting of kitchens and the introduction of labor saving devices in them led women to desire brightly colored pots and pans by way of emphasizing their release from the old time drudgery. To Mr. Thomas the role of the artist-designer is not to force embellishments on the consumer but to study "the production of things that will make our age peculiarly and fittingly an interpretation of ourselves." He urges the study of the psychology of taste, just as advertising men continually study the psychology of the "selling appeal"—and its converse, "sales resistance."

"Colors do not come into being over night and go out in a week," he states. "It takes years for colors to reach their full popularity in this country. Two years ago Cheney Brothers commenced a graphing of color acceptance. Some of us suspected that we might find that colors moved in trends, but nothing had ever been put down on paper on the subject. After considerable study we evolved a system for figuring color acceptance in mathematical form, and found that colors moved in clearly traceable trends;

<sup>62</sup> Paul Bonner, Paul Thomas, J. E. Alcott and H. E. Nock, "How the Manufacturer Copes with the Fashion, Style and Art Problem," General Management Series No. 98, American Management Association, New York, 1929, pp. 5-12.

that it takes a color as much as three years to come into its full popularity, and that then it will dwindle off for another year before it completely disappears. We found that color families move in trends; that there may be many variations of red which women are wearing today, that they are wearing more reds than greens, or more greens than browns."

A manufacturer of silverware, Mr. H. E. Nock, gives somewhat similar testimony as to the value of studying the consumers' tastes. "We have," he states, "what is called the Designing Group, or more correctly speaking the Designing Committee. It is composed of men who conceive and men who carry out. That is, the primary and supplementary inspiration. Those who furnish the primary inspiration, the designers themselves, must have in the designing of Sterling Silver a broad knowledge of the classics; but they must have more than this—they must go out into the highways and byways of life and must sense that something which before it actually exists they can incorporate in the goods which they will make, so that when they are finally presented to Madame the consumer she will without hesitancy say, 'I like it.' For, without such ability to understand what I continually reiterate, 'the harmonious inter-relations,' one may create things 'beautiful' but not things that sell."<sup>63</sup>

It is evident, from a mass of similar testimony, that the manufacturer and the commercial designer of today are not trying to force new standards on the consumer but are engaged in a rather frantic effort to ascertain what the consumer wants. The consumer, apparently, is setting the pace. His likes and dislikes are charted as though they were natural phenomena. It is recognized that they change much more rapidly than they used to. According to a study made by the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company<sup>64</sup> a lace manufacturer testified that "99.9 percent of his production comprised new styles and designs"; a shoe company that 30 percent of its output was "novelties"; a glass manufacturer that 75 percent of his production was devoted to new styles and designs; a paper manufacturer that 40 percent was of new styles; an underwear manufacturer that within a five year

<sup>63</sup> General Management Series No. 98, *op. cit.*, pp. 16-20.

<sup>64</sup> "The Use of Style and Design in Industry," Policyholders' Service Bureau, Metropolitan Life Insurance Company, New York. (Undated booklet, but with data running through the year 1928.)

period (prior to 1928) the staple items in his line had declined from 80 percent to not more than one-third. Most manufacturers make a practice of trying out new designs in small lots and some of them make very careful preliminary studies. The General Electric Company goes so far as to design machinery in plants where "public inspection is frequently invited" in such a way as to "present as attractive an appearance as possible, smoothing off angles, avoiding protruding nuts and bolts and encasing "irregular and unattractive mechanism" in metal envelopes "to secure the proper compact, unbroken effect." Representatives of a number of industries, including manufacturers of silks, dust mops, woodwork, and automobiles, testified in the Metropolitan study that style and design were of increasing importance as factors in sales.

These data indicate that advertising and salesmanship are at least not the all-important factors in determining popular taste that some critics of "standardization" have believed them to be. They may operate to spread a style that has already gained a small and influential following, but other and powerful influences certainly enter into the process. If the consumer's tastes are changing the reasons for that change cannot be found in any one formula. Some of the factors other than advertising and salesmanship have already been suggested. Art courses in the schools, freer access to museums and exhibitions, extension courses and lectures, must all have played a part. So, too, must the element of fatigue, which leads to constant craving for new styles, and which, if aesthetic theory be sound, leads in time to the elimination of bad styles. By "bad," in this connection, it should be added, is meant styles which are psychologically unsound; there is clearly a distinction to be drawn between artistic elements which find almost universal acceptance over long periods of time and in many lands, and those which do not.

Some weight must always be allowed to the human tendency to imitate—a tendency which may produce some aesthetically inferior results. "It is the people of wealth and culture," says Paul Bonner, a silk manufacturer,<sup>65</sup> "who start a fashion. From that point it grows . . . Today the publications of this country are giving enormous impetus to public demand for fashion, no matter what the object is, from that smallest peak to the point

<sup>65</sup> General Management Series No. 98, *op. cit.*

where it is universally accepted. They are hitting on it almost immediately, whether it is furniture, interiors, architectural details for country homes, silks for dresses—no matter what. Publications are vying with one another to spread the information as quickly as possible that such and such a thing is the last word. So that the time it takes for that fashion to rise from the little peak where you have a limited production, a limited appeal, to a universal demand, is shorter today than it was, and it will be still shorter tomorrow. You are being educated about the people as a whole; learning that more people have good taste, and are able to get these publications and read them intelligently."

The phrase "people of money and culture" may indicate that it is money rather than culture that is in the speaker's mind, and that we are dealing with a phenomenon which the late Professor Veblen called "conspicuous waste." But the new emphasis upon design still remains an important one. If more importance is accorded to the aesthetic qualities of silverware, jewelry, fabrics, furniture and interior decoration than to the market value of the metals, precious stones, laces and rare woods used to make them the result has significance in a study of artistic trends.

The same comment may be made regarding attempts of manufacturers and merchants of distinct but related articles to harmonize their products according to a definite style trend. "There is a movement afoot now," says Mr. Paul Bonner, already quoted, "to co-ordinate the different departments of the department stores, and not have each department independently styled according to some vague notion as to what style is, but to have the hat department have hats that will go with the dresses in the dress department; shoes in the shoe department that won't swear at the dress and the hat. That is gaining headway and is being taken up seriously by a considerable number of stores in the country. I predict that in a few years the styling of stores will be handled as one central thought, not each department doing its own styling."

Reports from typical department stores suggest that they are giving particular attention to "styling" their goods and to making the "ensemble" effects harmonious, not only in women's clothing but in the whole domestic environment which they touch at nearly every point. The evidence of this new policy is offered as suggestive of a trend. It is, of course, not conclusive, since it cannot be proven

that department stores which have adopted it are more prosperous than those which have not; or that the same stores would not have been equally prosperous had they not adopted it. That it has been adopted in metropolitan stores whose policies are usually imitated by stores in smaller cities is, of course, significant. It is unfortunately not yet possible to get a clear picture of the effects of the depression upon the aesthetic aspects of retail selling. That expenditures in general have been curtailed as profits have shrunk is evident; that the retail selling price has become a more important factor is also undeniable. The tenor of advertising, however, is still indicative of an emphasis upon styling.

One metropolitan department store head thus presents his general conclusions, in a private letter: "It seems to me in industrial art this desire for skillfully made, useful and beautiful objects is innate with most people, and that the normal man or woman who has the means and opportunities without conscious effort will try to improve the appearance of the things he or she constantly uses. Or, to state the case from the shop-keeper's point of view, it seems to me that the needed article which is well made, of appropriate materials, with well balanced lines and harmonious colors, will sell more readily than an article which, although it may perform the same economic service, is without artistic merit. Many years ago I announced this belief to the merchandising members of our organization, and suggested that it would help us all if we acquired some knowledge of the elemental principles of art and used them in making our selections. Some of my associates had always subconsciously practiced the idea. However, a number of old-timers who had been fairly successful at that time expressed their doubts of the trading value of such a theory. At this time, some fourteen or fifteen years later, I think nearly all the selectors of merchandise follow the doctrine."

In one large city store the art department had 29,795 customers in 1926 and 59,431 in 1930, the latter figure representing an annual sale of about a quarter of a million dollars. Ten years ago, according to the head of this department, the demand was for reproductions of the more popular artists' work, girls' heads, lush landscapes, sentimental home pictures and the like. These preferences are still to be found, but both quantitatively and relatively they have been left behind by a demand for etchings

and original oils. Lithographic reproductions have some vogue but not as much as they had five or six years ago. Old prints, both in the original and in reproduction, have had a good sale since 1926, at least relatively. Children and young mothers have shown a liking for the child drawings of the German, French and Austrian modernists, though the older mothers still cling to the conventional sentimental pictures. Such facts as these would indicate that this particular store has a clientele which is beginning to appraise the fine and applied arts more discriminatingly than did its predecessors. The art department has a store-wide influence, for it would manifestly be absurd for an establishment to maintain high standards in this department and not extend them to articles which are the products of commercial design.

A Philadelphia store several years ago joined with the Pennsylvania Museum in displaying in its own departments exhibits selected to illustrate "the growing appreciation of art in everyday life." Members of the museum staff arranged and labelled the exhibits. Rugs, lamps, mirrors, furniture, upholstery, glassware, pottery, linens, women's wear, hand bags, silverware and jewelry made up most of the 386 specimens shown, and the origin and characteristics of the designs, whether modern or classical, American or foreign, were briefly described on the labels. The accompanying announcement emphasized the statement that "the store offers the public innumerable quality products that have their origin in the wealth of objects of art that the museums of the city possess—products modern or antique in design that are based on the fundamentals created by the master craftsmen of the Middle Ages and later periods."

Such exhibitions represent the best that commercial designers can do, as seen in the light of modern artistic standards. The reader who cannot go to an exhibition may find such standards illustrated in publications like the *Annual of American Design*. Excellent photography, an art which has made rapid technical progress during recent years, plays a large part in such a volume. It is readily seen that there is no detail of American life which has not been touched by the art of the designer, working not only with individual objects but with ensembles. Chairs, tables, beds, lamps, wallpapers, wall finishes, tiles, toilet sets, telephone instruments, food cans and packages, textiles in all their various uses, tableware

of all sorts, kitchen ware, bathroom equipment, all have been re-designed. The effects of this movement upon the domestic interior will be touched upon in the next chapter. Incidentally, it may be pointed out that the stores themselves in many cases have modernized their interiors and their shop windows in keeping with the nature of the modern goods they have in stock. One well known Pittsburgh department store, constructed several years ago, has attracted attention the country over by its murals. The modernized store, of course, has a tendency to "modernize" the customer. The store itself may become a museum of living art, supplementing the work of the actual museum—even to some extent, and without the religious implications, playing in its customers' lives the role once monopolized by the cathedral.

In dealing with such evidence, much of it based more on opinion than on measurable fact, there are manifest limitations to be recognized. Unless we set up aesthetic standards which are beyond the scope of this discussion, and which would in any case be difficult to sustain and valueless to those who did not accept them, it is impossible to say that there has been absolute progress in commercial design or in popular taste. It would be just as difficult to establish the fact of retrogression. The growth of interest in design during the past thirty, twenty or even ten years can be established, but we cannot accurately determine the rate of such growth, though we can be sure that it has been more rapid since the World War than before.

To pretend that anything like a Utopia in commercial design has been arrived at would be fatuous. "It would seem clear," states Dr. Charles R. Richards in *Art in Industry*, "that the relations between the creation of designs and their marketing in the printed silks industry are not such as to tend surely to a constant and natural advance in artistic standards." The same statement might be made with regard to other industries. Public taste cannot be changed or radically improved over night, and Dr. Richards thinks it has not been.

The less expensive the finished goods and the more extensive the clientele for which they are provided the fewer risks the manufacturer can afford to take with novel designs. In this respect he is very much in the position of the motion picture producer or the radio broadcasting company, neither of which agencies

dares go far beyond the supposed tastes of its patrons, and both of which, in an excess of caution, may fall below them. A new design in fabrics or furniture is often expensive to launch; it may, therefore, have to make its way slowly by being sold first at high prices to "people of money and culture." They, in turn, may drop it as soon as it is produced cheaply in large quantities—and because, irrespective of its artistic goodness or badness, it is produced cheaply and in large quantities—and it may go the way of other fads and fancies. Such designs may have as little lasting significance as the varying lengths of women's skirts or the successive waves of popularity for one material or another in the making of furniture. Imitations of designs with which the public is already reasonably familiar may under such conditions have a better chance of acceptance than those which are original. If we tentatively accept the number of original American designs as a test of our aesthetic advance in this field we cannot be unaware of the difficulties which such designs encounter.

A long process of development seems to lie ahead. As Mr. Richard F. Bach, quoted earlier, has put it: "Very slowly the designer emerges once more. Little by little, as the products of the factories acquire again the savor of quality, their machines come into a new era of effectiveness, in which they are used truly as tools. This gives the designer his chance; he will in the near future use these tools in terms of their capacity to produce what they *can* produce; in other words, he will make the tool fit the purpose but let the purpose rule . . . We may learn by observation and analysis the limitations and capacities of machinery and materials; and if the designer begins with these—as have the designers before him in all other styles—interpreting them intelligently, we shall have the essentials of a correct expression, a step toward style. We cannot *require* that he have imagination also, though we may hope for such grace.

"At any rate, the designer steps forth again as a personality, and the manufacturer, his employer, is gradually becoming convinced that a good designer is more than a working asset—an item of good will in the firm's relationship toward the consuming public; furthermore, competition soon demonstrates that such an asset is negotiable. In fact, it is now the accepted practice for manufacturers to employ well known artists, some of whom receive



royalties on sales in addition to a fixed price for designs purchased; and a number of firms employ advisers in design as one might employ a physician to assure health rather than to cure illness.

"Our need now is twofold: first, to protect the right of designers in the industrial arts to the products of their creative ability, as we do those of composers and authors; second, to train men and women of calibre who can express the needs and feelings of today in terms of the producing methods and materials of today."

A growing consciousness of color and of form seems already to be discernible as a result of such development in commercial design as has already taken place. The number of colors now practicable for commercial use, and the number of articles to which they are applied—typewriters, toothbrushes, towels, pots and pans, umbrellas, overshoes and what not—have both greatly increased. Color in women's dress is taken for granted; yet its range and variety is largely a product of the present century, and even of the past ten or fifteen years. Men's clothing, particularly for country wear, also shows a greater tendency toward brightness than it has for a century and a half, though there is no reason to believe that the American male either wishes or expects to outshine the female in this respect. In the matter of form, as has been suggested, the automobile has been an educator.

Whatever may be thought of the present stage of commercial design, and whether the individual is an optimist or a pessimist in regard to it, there can be little doubt that it is offering an increasingly important outlet for such artistic ability as the country possesses. This outlet may not afford opportunity for full self-expression, any more than did the religious paintings and sculptures of the Middle Ages. Commercial art is art practiced under very definite restraints. Nevertheless its limitations will be broadened in proportion as the designer acquires, as testimony indicates he is acquiring, a position of dignity and influence. It is not beyond possibility that, next to architecture, the artistically creative American may find his most satisfactory and typical expression in this field. It is not, indeed, "art for art's sake," nor even art for the artist's sake, but art for the consuming public's sake. But neither is it necessarily hostile to "fine art," nor are those who practice it cutting themselves off from the practice of the "fine arts."

Commercial art is popular art; in a sense it is folk art. It may be insincere in the same way that an author is insincere who consciously "writes down" to his public. It may fall below the level of artistic standards historically developed for limited and sophisticated groups. But its expansion both requires and implies a growing popular interest in the aesthetic. That such a popular interest has manifested itself in this way in the United States, especially during the period between the end of the World War and the depression of 1929, is indisputable.

## CHAPTER XI

### ART IN DAILY LIFE

ALL the arts and art trends which have been described have a bearing on the daily lives of the people. There would be little to note as to the architecture, interior decoration, furniture and mechanical equipment of the home if changes in these fields did not correspond to changes in the ideas and living habits of the home's occupants. These ideas and habits reflect the stage of a civilization. How have they altered? How are they altering?

The home itself, whether it belong to rich, moderately well to do or poor, has grown smaller. In many middle class houses and apartments the dining-room has disappeared, either to be combined with the living-room or to be replaced by an alcove. Few modern builders would include both a "sitting-room" and a "parlor" in their house designs, as their predecessors habitually did a half century or less ago. For most families—certainly for most families in cities and towns—the importance of the dwelling-place has diminished, owing to the fact that there are more, and more accessible, outside diversions than used to exist. The automobile has done much to break up the old type of family "home evening," though the radio, there is some reason to believe, has contributed a little toward restoring it. On this latter point a recent student of the small town, Mr. Albert Blumenthal,<sup>66</sup> speaks interestingly, basing his statement on conditions in a small Montana community.

"When there is 'nothing else to do,' " he says, "people turn to the radio, and quite unintentionally they often find themselves interested in a serious lecture. This sometimes loud instrument helps to make the home fires attractive when, otherwise, members of the family would be scattered to various places in and out of town. It offers a cheap form of entertainment and one that is providing serious competition to the local theatre, the churches and many evening gatherings. A frequent excuse for absence from any

<sup>66</sup> In *Small-town Stuff*, University of Chicago Press, 1932, pp. 386-387.

evening gathering is: 'I was lying down and listening to the radio. There was a peach of a program. I just couldn't get myself to clean up and go out in the cold when I was so comfortable.' If the automobile actually is breaking down the family by increasing the mobility of its members and causing them to spend little time at home, it would seem that the radio is an effective antidote."

At any rate, homes continue to exist, and some attention is given to their appearance as well as to their convenience and comfort. Space limitations perhaps lead to more careful planning than would be done if there were more room. The modern homemaker's problem is not to fill a dwelling-place with quaint or pretty knickknacks as much as it is to dispose acceptably of the objects which have to be in it. Simplicity is almost forced upon her—for feminine this choice of home furnishings, as well as of most goods bought in most stores, is almost sure to be.

The outward appearance of the single-family house seems to most observers to show better taste than that of corresponding houses a generation ago. In *Middletown* the Lynds<sup>67</sup> found that "those of the poorest working-class families appear essentially the same externally as they did in the middle of the last century—bare little one-story oblong wooden boxes with a roof and with partitions inside making two to four small rooms." On the other hand "the large homes of the more prosperous members of the business class exhibit considerably greater simplicity of line than a generation ago."

The Lynds make a penetrating and pertinent comment: "The disappearance of the ornate house of the 'seventies and 'eighties, decked out in elaborate scrolls and 'gingerbread work,' in favor of the plainer homes of today, in which the emphasis is upon all manner of new interior devices in bathroom and elsewhere, probably reflects, among other things, a tendency commonly observable in human culture: in periods when improvements in effectiveness of the utility of a tool are at a standstill, human ingenuity tends to spend itself in decorating the tool, but in periods of evolution in the effectiveness of the major use ornamentation tends to assume a place of secondary importance. The Middletown house

<sup>67</sup> *Middletown: A Study in Contemporary American Culture*, by Robert S. Lynd and Helen Merrell Lynd, New York, 1929. This survey of a small American city, based on field work completed in 1925, has already become a classic. It has a wealth of first hand material bearing on the subject under discussion in the present volume.

of the 'eighties was simply a box divided into rooms, with relatively few changes in process in its adaptation as a place in which to live comfortably. The coming of bathrooms, a wide range of electrical equipment, central heating and other inventions, is today focusing attention upon a wide variety of changes in the interior liveableness, with corresponding decline in exterior ornamentation."

It cannot, of course, be assumed that a "decline in exterior ornamentation" is in itself a sign of progress. It can only be said that standards in this respect have changed, and that to most of us, accepting those standards, the change looks like progress. The genius of the age, in this country and elsewhere, is manifestly concentrating upon what might be called use-beauty and the accentuation of functional form. We have to go back to the Romanesque to find an analogy, and in the Romanesque it is possible that the qualities we now admire arose out of the limitations of technique and material rather than from premeditated taste. It may be that our age is the first which, at least in its more "modern" phases, has possessed every technical facility for decoration and yet which has refused to decorate.

Middletown interiors, the Lynds found, differed as widely as exteriors, and in accordance with social and economic levels. At the lowest economical level there was the untidiness resulting from poverty, discouragement and overwork. We need pause only a moment to glance at "the worn green shades hanging down at a tipsy angle admitting only a flecked half-light upon the ornate calendars or enlarged crayon portraits of the children in heavy gilt frames tilted out at a precarious angle just below the ceiling."

At a somewhat higher economic level, but still within the ranks of manual workers: "There are geraniums in the front windows, neat with their tan, tasseled shades and coarse lace curtains. A name-plate of silvered glass adorns the door. The small living room is light, with a rather hard brightness, from the blue- and pink-flowered rug, bought on installment, to the artificial flowers, elaborately embroidered pillows and many-colored 'center pieces.' The furniture is probably straight-lined 'mission' of dark or golden oak, or, if the family is more prosperous, 'overstuffed.' The sewing machine stands in the living room or dining room, and the ironing board with its neat piles of clothes stretches across one corner of the kitchen. Knicknacks of all sorts are about—easled portraits

on piano or phonograph, a paper knife brought by some travelled relative from Yellowstone Park, pictures that the small daughter has drawn in school, or if the family is of a religious bent, colored mottos: 'What will you be doing when Jesus comes?' or 'Prepare to meet thy God.' There may even be a standing lamp with a bright silk shade, another recent installment purchase and a mark of prestige. Some magazines may be lying about, but rarely any books.

"The homes of some head bookkeepers, owners of small retail stores, school teachers, and other less wealthy members of the business group convey an atmosphere of continual forced choices between things for the house and things for the children—between a hardwood floor for the front hall and living rooms or a much-needed rug and the same amount of money put into music lessons or Y.M.C.A. summer camp. These houses may be twenty years old and unadorned, with small rooms and a miscellany of used furniture. There is less likely to be a radio than in the more prosperous working-class home, but one may come upon a copy of Whistler's portrait of his mother or a water-color landscape and a set of Dickens or Irving in a worn binding; the rugs are often more threadbare than those in the living room of a foreman, but textbooks of a missionary society or of a study section of the Women's Club are lying on the mission library table.

"To some more prosperous members of the business group their homes are a source of pride as they walk up a neatly-paved, tree-bordered street to homes which are 'the last word in the up-to-date small house.' The house may be shingled or stuccoed, in a trim, terraced yard. Everything from the bitter-sweet in the flower-holder by the front door to the modern mahogany smoking table by the over-stuffed davenport bespeaks correctness. The long living room opens by a double doorway into the dining-room. Colors in rugs, chair coverings, curtains and the elaborate silk shades of the standing lamps match. There are three or four pictures—colored photographs of Maxfield Parrish prints—hung precisely at the level of the eyes, a pair of candlesticks on the sectional bookcase, and a few bowls and trays; the kitchen cabinet has every convenience . . .

"A group of wealthy families live in 'fine old places' in the 'East End' of town, some of them still in the houses where the

husband or wife was born. These houses may be large, heavy brick or stone affairs, with perhaps two stone lions guarding the driveway near the old hitching post and carriage block, bearing the owner's name. Other families live in rambling, comfortable frame houses in this section, while still others are following the movement out to the newer college district. Here they build low homes of brick or field stone or of the white Dutch colonial type, with every convenience in the way of plumbing and lighting and with spacious glassed-in porches.

"Whether the father of one of these families comes home from office or bank to the large parlors and library of the older type of house, or to the ample long living room of the new, he is greeted by an atmosphere of quiet and peace. The wide rooms, soft hangings, old mahogany, one-toned rugs or deep-colored Orientals, grand piano, fireplaces, cut flowers, open book-shelves with sets of Mark Twain and Eugene Field and standard modern novels, the walls hung with prints of the Bargello, St. Mark's, 'Mme. Lebrun and Her Daughter,' may be combined with certain individual touches, a piece of tapestry on the wall, a picture not seen elsewhere, a blue Chinese bowl."

Economic status seems to be the most important factor in determining these different types of homes—directly, as reflected in the family income, indirectly as reflected in the amount and kind of education the father and mother have been able to obtain. No doubt even the poorer homes could be more tastefully built and furnished than they are—that is to say, more in accordance with prevailing tastes of architects and interior decorators—with no increase in the amount spent upon them. But to bring about this result would require a level of artistic education in the elementary and grammar grades which has not been attained in "Middletown" or in many other communities.

"Creative art" in Middletown, according to the Lynds, has actually suffered a decline since the 1890's. In those days there was an Art Students' League; "the members rented a studio where some of them worked daily, having a class model one evening a week. Members brought sketches to each meeting, sketches made on the river bank or in their yards or homes." The League is now a "fashionable club," which meets to listen to lectures or to papers by members. On the other hand, art volumes in the public library

increased from 45 in 1890 to 1,150 at the date of the Lynd inquiry, the high school has a collection of paintings, and there are occasional loan exhibitions from museums in other cities, there are art courses in the public schools, and the High School has a "Daubers' Club made up of boys and girls from all sections of the city." But, "like music, art seems somehow to drop out of the picture between the time boys and girls sketch in their high school classes and the time they become immersed in the usual activities of Middletown adults." That is to say, despite the greater attention given to art by the schools almost everywhere, as has been mentioned in a previous chapter, the subject apparently has not been engrafted into the community culture. One cannot read the Lynds' description of Middletown homes without realizing that Middletown people do crave some form of aesthetic satisfaction and that they take steps to attain it as soon as the pressure of the struggle for existence is at all relaxed; at the same time their aesthetic standards seem often to be dictated by the desire for social prestige and rarely expressive of an independent and well informed taste.

It would be interesting to compare with the Lynds' admirable picture of the "Middletown" home an equally accurate study of a metropolitan apartment house or a typical suburban home in the neighborhood of one of our great cities. Unfortunately, no such studies are at present available. We can judge the metropolis and its suburbs only by limited personal observation and by the knowledge that the metropolitan and suburban homemaker is at least more often exposed to the arts than are her country and small-town cousins. There is no artistic innovation that does not have its day in court in the larger cities; in the museums, in special exhibitions, in the libraries, in the department stores, the city and suburban dweller who is at all interested in such things has plenty of opportunities to study them.

The modern practice, first adopted by the museums, later by the stores, of showing "period" rooms or "modern" rooms, in which furniture, woodwork, wall paper and fittings make an ensemble, must have had an influence. A branch librarian in New York city reported not long ago that she had been shown an apartment in which decoration and details had been copied entirely from books taken from the library. The "American Wing" of the Metropolitan Museum in New York city helped to create a vogue for



the early American, and modernist exhibits have undoubtedly had their influence. It may be surmised that even the domestic interior as shown on the stage and in the motion pictures<sup>68</sup> has had its effect on the aesthetic ideas of those who look at them for a pleasant hour or two. The popularization of the "germ theory" of disease has probably hastened the disappearance of plush and other dust-collecting—and presumably germ-collecting—fabrics and objects. Much interest has been shown in such novelties as Mr. Kocher's "Aluminaire" house. Design, as pointed out in the preceding chapter, has come to be an essential "selling point" in household articles of daily use. The American home has been rapidly progressing in the convenience of its arrangements and in the elimination of unnecessary and space-consuming details—particularly in the kitchen and the bathroom. Stoves, sinks, pots and pans, the new mechanical devices are designed with thought of their appearance as well as of their utility. A flour mixer for domestic use failed to sell because, though useful, it was unattractive; the manufacturer re-designed and enamelled it, with a subsequent improvement in sales.

The bathroom has not yet completed its conquest of America. One in four of the homes in "Middletown" in 1925 lacked running water; a survey some years ago showed that about 38 percent of the homes in Zanesville, Ohio, had neither running water nor bathrooms; in "Mineville" Mr. Blumenthal found that only 40 percent of the households had a bathroom. But the number of such conveniences is increasing, and in modern homes much attention is being paid to their appearance. Even the "period" bathroom, an anachronism if ever there was one, has been introduced here and there. Some impatient critics are convinced that though Americans are paying more attention to design within the home it is bad design which now predominates. "The modern American house," says Mr. Lewis Mumford,<sup>69</sup> "can be tritely described as a house that is neither modern nor American. A gallery that today exhibited American taste would be a miscellany of antiquities. The pictures we put on our walls, our cretonnes and brocades and wall papers, our china, our silverware, our furniture, are all copies

<sup>68</sup> See discussion of this point by Willey and Rice in *Communication Agencies and Social Life*, *op. cit.*

<sup>69</sup> In *Harper's Magazine*, October, 1927.

or close adaptations of things we have found on their historic sites in Europe and America, or, at one remove, in the museum." Mr. Mumford doubts "if any period has ever exhibited so much spurious taste as the present one; that is, so much taste derived from hearsay, from imitation, and from the desire to make it appear that mechanical industry has no part in our lives and that we are all blessed with heirlooms testifying to a long and prosperous ancestry in the Old World. Our taste, to put it brutally, is the taste of parvenus."

But the word "parvenu" merely implies, disparagingly, that Americans have more to spend on decoration than they used to have, which, when we compare the present not with 1929 but with 1909 or 1889, is obviously the case. For millions of them art is in the formal sense a new experience, in which they doubtless fumble, lose their way or accept poor leadership. For sensitive aesthetes the results often cannot help but be deplorable. But they can also be regarded under the circumstances as a perfectly normal phase of social evolution.

Aesthetically, the American woman dominates the home, whether she be a housekeeper bringing up a large family of children in a Middle Western hamlet, or a childless wage earner in a New York City apartment. This statement, a truism to most males, may be supported by the testimony of advertisers and retailers that an overwhelming proportion of all advertising is addressed to women and an overwhelming proportion of all retail sales are made to women.<sup>70</sup> What seems to be true of purchases in general is doubly true of articles of personal adornment. A study of advertisements will show that the primary appeal in the advertising of men's clothing is that of price in relation to wearing quality, with style distinctly secondary. Styles in men's clothing change but slowly and its various items may ordinarily be used until they wear out or become shabby, with no fear on the wearer's part that they will become demoded. The problem of self-beautification is primarily feminine. And here arises a question of taste which is difficult to answer.

We may be firmly convinced that the colonial and Empire styles in women's dress were beautiful and that the bustles and

<sup>70</sup> A department store executive, Miss Bess Bloodworth, states that 80 percent of the customers in such stores are women. See "Public Contact Training," Public Relations Series No. 2, American Management Association, New York, 1931, pp. 52 ff.

leg-of-mutton sleeves of the late Victorian era were hideous. We may in part support these preferences and dislikes by certain functionalist arguments, to the effect that that clothing is most artistic which expresses and permits a free and natural carriage of the wearer's body. But in general the case for progress in this field rests upon the introduction of new materials and the greater variety and freedom of choice that women are now offered, as compared with what used to be available.

Even more than is the case with men, the American female can now adapt her costume to her various activities. The "divided skirt" which caused much shocked comment during the bicycling craze of the 'nineties developed into the ornate pajama costume and the frank adoption of trousers and breeches for many outdoor activities. The cumbersome bathing costumes of the 'nineties and the early years of the present century have been reduced to a utilitarian brevity which permits women to swim as well as do their male friends and relatives. During the past year or two there has been a reaction toward greater elaborateness, perhaps greater clumsiness, in women's dress. Prior to that time, according to Silas Bent,<sup>71</sup> men's clothing on an average weighed about fifteen pounds and women's about one-tenth as much; and men, when fully dressed, went about with a temperature of 88 degrees and a humidity of 70 within their clothes, as compared with a temperature of 80 and a humidity of 55 in the case of women.

New fabrics have enlarged the field of dress designers. "A professor of chemistry," Mr. Bent states, "has announced that from asbestos will come frocks with a sheen as charming as silk, a durability as great as that of homespun and a production cost about half that of other desirable materials. Artificial cotton can now be made from a fibre root . . . Rayon is man's first artificial fibre. It looks like silk, but there the resemblance ends, for it is manufactured from cellulose . . . Yet curiously it has not hurt the silk business. For one thing, even your maid comes to work nowadays in silk stockings; in England Queen Elizabeth was the first so to adorn her ankles, and for a long time she stood alone. Also, silk and satin frocks are popular now; so that while we were

<sup>71</sup> See Mr. Bent's interesting chapter on "Clothes" in *Machine-Made Man*, New York, 1931. The silk business has suffered since Mr. Bent's chapter was written but probably not because of the competition of rayon.

reaching the high-water mark in the use of rayon our importations of silk mounted to more than \$400,000,000, which was about one-tenth of all we spent for foreign goods."

The opportunity for aesthetic expression in women's dress lies, however, less in the use of any given material or medium than in the constant experimentation which is going on. So many styles are tried that, if only by the law of chances, some of them cannot help being good. Intelligent women, with some economic leeway, make use of the wide assortment of fabrics and colors with almost the same instinct for composition which governs an artist in painting a picture. Behind the aesthetic is, of course, a sociological and psychological situation. For a long time woman has used dress as a lure for the male in lieu of more direct methods of capturing him, and as she becomes economically more independent and more powerful this device may become less necessary. We may some day have "functionalist" dress for both sexes, just as we have some samples of "functionalist" architecture and "functionalist" furniture, and this would imply a suppression of ornament.

In the meantime dress remains for the American woman a form of artistic expression, more or less expertly practiced. From a sculptural point of view it is undoubtedly more satisfactory today than it was ten or twenty years ago because, like the modern type of architecture, it emphasizes rather than conceals the supporting structure. Woman is no longer ashamed of possessing a vigorous and healthy body, and the best types of modern costume, unlike those of a relatively few years ago, do not distort her normal proportions.

But, clearly, neither the home and its physical setting nor costume, nor both together, can sum up the influence of the arts in daily life. No matter how much attention is given them they are little more than a framework. To what extent do the arts or the aesthetic impulses enter into the use of leisure? Most of the ways in which they may do so have already been considered or will be considered in later chapters. The libraries, the museums, the radio, lectures, concerts, study clubs, the motion picture, the "legitimate" theatre, all play a part, and each has an aesthetic implication of some sort. Gardening may be regarded as an art; the increase of the sale of flower packet seeds from 407,359 in 1922 to 622,520 in 1928, while the sale of vegetable packet seeds declined,

implies an aesthetic interest. So does the growth of the Garden Clubs of America, within a period of fifteen years, from 13 units and 600 members to 94 units and 7,000 members—though 7,000 amateur gardeners count for but little in America's sea of population. The increase in the number of automobiles used for pleasure purposes, the enormous growth of the army of golfers, the greater attention given to outdoor life, may all have significance for us. The cult of nature has its aesthetic phases, and a love of natural beauty may be the beginning of an interest in art.

American cities in 1928 had more than a billion dollars invested in parks and were spending \$100,000,000 a year to maintain them; state reserves, more than half of them in the state of New York, covered four and a half million acres; and the national park system included 23 parks with a total area of nearly eight million acres. Between 1920 and 1930 the visitors to the national parks<sup>72</sup> of the United States increased in number from 920,000 to 2,775,000 (in 1932 the latter figure was given by Horace M. Albright, Director of the National Park Service, in his annual report, as 3,754,596—this after three years of depression!), and visitors to the national forests from 4,833,000 to 31,905,000. Private and public golf courses in the United States had an estimated property valuation of more than \$850,000,000 in 1930, nearly 1,900,000 players regularly used them, and 25,500,000 golf balls were sold. These huge totals have mostly been rolled up since the end of the World War. Automobile touring has attracted even greater multitudes. In 1929, according to an estimate of the American Automobile Association, 45,000,000 persons took vacation motor tours, though this number declined between 10 and 15 percent during the first year of the depression. Statistics of fishing and hunting licenses indicate that during the season of 1928-1929 about 7,250,000 persons engaged in one or both of these sports. These instances indicate the great growth of leisure time activities in the United States. Mr. J. F. Steiner has estimated that the American people spend upon all such activities, indoors and outdoors, commercial and otherwise, the total annual sum of \$10,219,857,000.

<sup>72</sup> These figures and some other material bearing on the general subject of recreation and the use of leisure time have been taken from "Recreation and Leisure Time Activities," by J. F. Steiner, Chapter XVIII of *Recent Social Trends in the United States*.

Not only do many of the activities represented in these vast expenditures contain the germs of a growing art interest; they also demonstrate that the American people in normal years have both the time and the money for satisfying any conceivable expansion of that interest. As we broaden the horizon from the home and the family group it becomes evident that this expansion will involve cooperation and organization whenever and wherever it takes place. Some illustrations of this point will be given in the two following chapters.

## CHAPTER XII

### MUSIC AND DANCING

THE mention of music in its relation to American life inevitably suggests two topics—jazz and mechanical reproduction. Jazz is a somewhat vague term for a whole class of popular music. Mechanical reproduction, particularly by means of the wireless telephone or radio, is the new factor which has made music not only accessible but practically unavoidable for all who can hear. Music, quantitatively speaking, does not have to make its way. It is not necessary to carry on a campaign to induce people to listen to it; though campaigns may be necessary to induce them to listen to it intelligently and attentively, and are certainly necessary if they are to be induced to produce it in any significant way.

The striking changes that have taken place in America's attitude toward music can be illustrated by statistics drawn from the *Census of Manufactures*, though unfortunately these cannot be brought down to date. In 1914 the output of our piano manufacturing was valued at \$62,775,000.<sup>73</sup> By 1925 the figure had risen to \$101,181,000. By 1927 it had dropped to \$75,491,000, by 1929 to \$43,515,000. The value of organs produced in 1914 was \$6,297,000, in 1925 it was \$12,283,000, in 1927 \$15,439,000, and in 1929 \$11,323,000.

Phonographs made a better showing, their values being \$27,116,000 in 1914; \$61,057,000 in 1925; \$95,296,000 in 1927; and \$96,849,000 in 1929. Radio apparatus, on the other hand, started with a modest production of \$792,000 in 1914, reached \$147,538,000 in 1925 and \$149,658,000 in 1927; and climbed to the fairly dizzy heights of \$411,637,000 in 1929.<sup>74</sup> By 1930 it was estimated

<sup>73</sup> This and succeeding figures are from the *Statistical Abstract of the United States* for 1930 and 1931, Table No. 814, *Census of Manufactures*.

<sup>74</sup> Except for the amount given for 1914 the figures for the production of radio sets and tubes are taken from the *Statistical Abstract* for 1931. Owing to changes in classification they differ from those published for the years 1925 and 1927 in the *Statistical Abstract* for 1930. The figure for 1914 is not strictly comparable with those for later years, though it serves its purpose in indicating the relative insignificance of the radio industry in the earlier year.

that \$235,000,000 was invested in radio stations, that the public had invested \$1,500,000,000 in sets, and that the total number of radio sets in use was 12,078,346—the latter being the federal census figure.<sup>75</sup>

If the radio is considered as a musical instrument, which in large part it is, these figures represent a noteworthy phenomenon. The sale of the standard instruments on which the individual makes his own music has either gained very slowly or declined, measured by value, though certain novelties such as the ukulele have gained rapidly. The devices which make the average person a passive listener have in the meanwhile made gigantic strides. Even the motion picture organist, pianist or orchestra player has been hard hit by films which sing and play as well as talk. On the other hand the best music, expertly rendered, is at certain times within the reach of more people than in any previous age. Music is today in much the same situation that painting would occupy if television were developed to a point where the choicest pictures in the art museums and exhibitions could be broadcast with some degree of accuracy. The air would not be crowded with the best in art, but the best would be at times available.

To evaluate critically the merits of radio music would be beyond the scope of this study. As every one who owns a set knows, the percentage of dance music, popular songs, "crooning" and semi-classical music of a very light order is high. For this reason our radio programs have been compared unfavorably with those of Great Britain, where radio sets are taxed and programs drawn up under governmental regulation. As radio broadcasting companies derive income from the sale of "time" they believe themselves to be under the necessity of attracting as large an audience as possible in order to justify high advertising rates; and they do not seem to believe, on the basis of carefully studied "fan mail," that the large audience will accept more than a modicum of the best music. Advertisers who broadcast announcements concerning their products with the bait of a musical performance apparently hold to the same opinion. Nevertheless, if we select the best instead of the worst in radio music, we find performances by singers of the highest standing, by gifted instrumentalists and by well known symphony orchestras. Much attention was attracted during the

<sup>75</sup> See Willey and Rice, *op. cit.*



opera season ending in the spring of 1932 by the experiment of broadcasting portions of productions at the Metropolitan Opera House in New York city. The announcer in this case, Mr. Deems Taylor, was not only a critic of music but an operatic composer.

"The blame given the radio was justifiable in the mid-twenties," says Augustus Delafield Zanzig,<sup>76</sup> "when listening-in was an exciting novelty finding its way into thousands of homes for the first time, and many a home still suffers heavily from its almost continuous use. But it is probable that life in most of the homes of unbridled radios would be even less interesting without that instrument, and recent experiments in broadcasting introductory lessons in piano and in band instruments give promise of making up in large measure for any decline in amateur singing and playing caused by it. If adequate facts could be gathered it would probably be found that this wonderfully improved carrier of an increasing amount of excellent music is now often a means of stimulating interest in good amateur performance as well as in mere listening. It is the combination of good performance over the radio and attractive opportunities to sing or play ourselves, or to learn to do so, that promises to convert an increasing number of us from passivism to self-expression. Part of our gratitude for the support given to the much enlarged provision for music in many public schools is doubtless due to the radio and phonograph that have made thousands of taxpayers and school officials realize the scope and power of music more fully than they ever had before."

The psychology of the radio listener has yet to be studied, so new a phenomenon is he. On the negative side it may be suggested that listening without responsibility or restraint, often amid a buzz of conversation, is harmful to one's powers of appreciation. It is a truism that one gets out of any art about what one puts into it. On the positive side it may be urged that the only way to train one's taste in music is to listen to a great deal of it, good, bad and indifferent. The more optimistic students of the radio programs agree with Mr. Zanzig that such programs have shown improvement since the first days, when anything that could be heard over the air was a novelty and the tuning in of

<sup>76</sup> In his *Music in American Life, Present and Future*, New York, 1932, from which the authors have drawn extensively for material presented in this chapter.

distant stations was a national sport. This stage may be compared with that in the development of the motion picture when the exhibition on the screen of a train, a crowd or anything else that moved was sufficient to interest an audience.

Says Daniel Gregory Mason,<sup>77</sup> musician and composer: "It is interesting to those of us who have high hopes for the future of radio to find that while jazz is still probably the preference of the majority of the vast radio audience, there is already a distinct tendency of that taste to refine itself, automatically, by cumulating experience. A newspaper note that the farmers are asking that less jazz be broadcast is highly suggestive. So is the correlative fact that as audiences have progressed in experience more and more good music has been recorded and broadcast; probably two or three years ago Mr. Damrosch would hardly have dared include in his program an entire movement of a Brahms symphony. There seems to be a natural evolution of taste, from fondness for the most trivial jazz and other popular claptrap to appreciation of the great masterpieces, which takes place automatically wherever full opportunity combines with the desire for growth and the strength of mind to concentrate. The great hope in radio is not only or chiefly that it gives this opportunity to more people than have ever had it before, but that for all of them it may prove to carry thus within itself the eventual correctives for its own more sinister immediate tendencies."

The dictum as to "a natural evolution of taste" is, of course, a matter of opinion; Mr. Mason is not conspicuous for the leniency of his critical judgments. The "sinister tendencies" to which he alludes arise, no doubt, from the so-called "commercialization" of the radio. But, unless we were completely mistaken in the interpretation given to the role of the arts in advertising and commercial design, "commercialization" is not in itself an evil. If radio audiences demanded Beethoven symphonies or the highest order of musical compositions the "commercial" radio would be obliged, for its own profit, to furnish them. A frequent criticism of radio music programs is that the general run of "studio talent" is of poor quality, and it is also contended that in attempting to give the public what it wants radio managers, like some publishers

<sup>77</sup> *In Tune In, America—A Study of Our Coming Musical Independence*, New York, 1932.

and many motion picture producers, give it much worse than it wants. The broadcasting of phonograph records is said to be actually growing in favor as a partial remedy for the unsatisfactory nature of many studio performances. The radio is, of course, no more and no less than any other machinery used for duplicating a design. It can rise as high as popular taste, or popular tolerance, and no higher. It can be an instrument for spreading musical culture, but the culture must first be there to spread, and the "radio audience" must be prepared to receive it. The radio is a thermometer; it registers the cultural weather.

Radio and other reproductive devices make a whole nation a single audience which may on occasion be entertained by a single singer or instrumentalist. The result is bound to be, in the end, terrific competition among performers and "technological unemployment" for those who fail in the race. Unemployment among musicians was growing even before the depression began. Mr. Olin Downes, music critic for the *New York Times*, has estimated that between twenty-five thousand and fifty thousand orchestral players were thrown out of work by the introduction of mechanical reproduction within the space of about two years. Even the soloist and the virtuoso—the "vicious virtuoso," as Mr. Mason calls him after considering some of his temperamental faults—are fewer in numbers and in opportunities than they used to be. Mr. J. M. Coopersmith of Columbia University has made an interesting study of three great orchestras, the Boston Symphony, the New York Philharmonic and the Chicago Orchestra, which shows that the number of concertos played rose from 90 in 1900 to 160 in 1920, but declined to 155 in 1930; that the number of arias sung rose from 67 in 1900 to 147 in 1910, but declined to 33 in 1930; while the total number of concerts given increased steadily from 216 in 1900 to 557 in 1930. The audiences of these three organizations thus heard more music by far in 1930 than in 1900, 1910 or 1920, but, except for the conductor, it was increasingly impersonal.

American composers, on the whole, have fared better than American performers. Mr. Mason, completing a list begun by Dr. Howard Hanson, finds that between 1919 and 1930 about twenty-six works by sixteen Americans were "able to hold place . . . in the repertoires of the chief symphony orchestras of the country." Holding back progress in this respect, Mr. Mason believes, "are,

first, conductors, interested primarily in their own virtuosity, or in the playing, however magnificent, of classic scores, or in propaganda for nations other than those they serve, or in sensationalism either for its commercial or for its fashionable and snobbistic values; and, second, audiences avid of sensation, novelty, and European prestige, or shifting, ignorant and indifferent, as they are apt to be in metropolises, where the transient element in the population is large."

But Mr. Mason adds: "On the other hand, we see by the example of Chicago that a progressive attitude toward our own music is nevertheless already at work, and working faithfully in centers where a steady provincial population of intelligent people is guided, educated and inspired by conductors of broad sympathies, living ideals and proportionate musical skill. And these conditions, happily, are more or less duplicated in Cincinnati, Cleveland, Detroit, Los Angeles, Minneapolis, St. Louis, and no doubt in a number of other cities . . . American music has already a habitat. And this habitat is enlarging as our tastes grow less conventional, less sensational, less servilely imitative of Europe—as we learn slowly how to be more self-reliant, inventive and hopeful." As we have seen, American composers can now receive training at such institutions as the Eastman School of Music in the University of Rochester, the Curtis School in Philadelphia and the Juilliard Graduate Music School in New York City.

Most good sized American communities have done something, through public or private agencies or both, to furnish their citizens with music on a non-commercial basis. Of thirteen outstanding American orchestras, according to Mr. Mason, only five were founded prior to 1900; the others came into existence in the following order: Philadelphia, 1900; Minneapolis, 1903; St. Louis, 1907; Seattle, 1907; San Francisco, 1909; Detroit, 1914; Cleveland, 1918; Los Angeles, 1919. Prior to 1903 the only prominent chamber music group was the Kneisel Quartet, "an offshoot of the Boston Orchestra." Some of America's great orchestras in recent years have reached a larger public by occasional concerts given free or at popular prices. The concerts given by the Cleveland and Detroit orchestras in the city parks are examples of this policy, as are also the concerts given in the Lewisohn Stadium in New York City during the summer months, and those given in the Metropolitan

Museum, to which as many as 11,000 persons have come on a single winter evening. Music lovers have been able to hear excellent orchestral programs for as little as twenty-five cents or half a dollar in Boston, Portland, Oregon, Minneapolis, San Francisco and Los Angeles. Children's concerts have become an established feature in New York City, Detroit, Minneapolis, Cleveland and Kansas City. In 1924 only 780 cities observed National Music Week; by 1928 the number had grown to 2,012. The training of listeners has been taken up in music appreciation courses in schools and colleges, in women's clubs and in a considerable number of popular books—how successfully can only be guessed at.

But listening to music is not generally considered by musical educators to be enough—even an ideal listener cannot be produced solely by listening. A nationwide movement to train amateurs to take part in producing music, in singing clubs, bands and orchestras is aimed at remedying this difficulty. Here, however, it is easier to find striking examples—which may be misleading merely because they are striking—than to arrive at a national estimate.

In Flint, Michigan, Mr. Zanzig, who has already been quoted, found an orchestra in each of eighteen elementary schools; "in three grades of the two senior high schools 400 students were in accompanied choruses, and 160 in two *a capella* choirs that rehearse for at least fifty-five minutes every day and sing the best choral music of all time"; 400 high school students were members of orchestras and bands; eight members of these orchestras and twenty graduates from them were playing in the city's symphony orchestra, and forty-five graduates of the high school bands had formed a community band out of their own membership. A Community Music Association had "provided for almost all kinds and degrees of musical interest and ability." Performances by family groups, by foreign born groups, by neighborhoods, by industrial groups, and in the churches were encouraged and brought to a high degree of excellence. There existed a community chorus, a symphony orchestra and at least eight bands, one of which gave public concerts in the parks during the summer months. The Choral Society and the Symphony Orchestra had joined in presenting grand opera in 1928 and 1929, there was an annual "yuletide festival of song," and each year since 1918 a Spring Music Festival.

## MUSIC AND DANCING

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The music director's comment upon these undertakings was: "Plenty of musical activity, but real appreciation is as yet limited to the groups and a small clientele."

In Winston-Salem, North Carolina, a Department of Public School and Community Music was organized in 1921, working under the direction of the School Commission and the Civic Music Commission. Music Week festivals, the organization of adult and children's choruses, a band, and a summer school for adult students have been some of the Department's activities. Ottawa, Kansas, with a population of less than 10,000 in 1930, had a Civic Orchestra of 60 pieces, largely developed out of players who received their training in the high school, and a number of other excellent musical organizations. Springfield, Vermont, with a population of about 8,000, organized an orchestra of 48 pieces, to the support of which the town contributed \$500 a year. Bangor, Maine, with a population under 30,000, has had an annual music festival every year for more than a third of a century; it has an orchestra of 65 members, and the festival chorus, recruited in Bangor and nearby towns, has 400 voices.

In Cincinnati the community musical organizations include a chorus of 140 from the mothers' clubs of the city, which gives two public concerts each year, a chorus of 200 young men and women, a chorus of 450 boys and girls from the public and parochial schools, a boys' band, a boys' orchestra and a girls' orchestra. Los Angeles has a Division of Musical Activities in its Department of Playground and Recreation, with a supervisor, four full time special directors, and a full time secretary and a number of part time accompanists. The activities include the production of operettas, the organization of small orchestras and rhythm bands, group singing by children. In 1928 the Division organized a Festival of Music in which several thousand children and adults took part, and its Christmas caroling has brought out as many as 15,000 singers on a single occasion. In San Francisco the Playground Commissioner has a Supervisor of Music, who in her first year of service, 1928-1929, "started and maintained at playground centers fifteen children's choruses, three rhythm bands, three harmonic bands, three adult choruses, and one playground orchestra, with a total enrollment of 553 persons." Two children's choruses, a young men's glee club, a mothers' chorus, and a Junior Civic

Symphony Orchestra were added in 1930. The city government also provided for a large community chorus.

In Santa Barbara, California, the Community Arts Association, among other activities, has maintained a music school, brought concerts and recitals to the city, provided free band concerts in summer, and has had a community chorus, a children's chorus, and a small orchestra. Denver has a Music Week Association, organized more than a decade ago, with a board of directors meeting weekly during the year, and an annual expenditure of between twelve and fourteen thousand dollars, of which \$4,000 has been appropriated by the city. Philadelphia has a municipal Bureau of Music, which has received as much as \$90,000 a year from the city budget, and which grew out of the city's first Music Week in 1922. It has the cooperation of a Music Commission whose eleven members represent the public schools, the University of Pennsylvania and the American Federation of Musicians.

In the colleges, during the past two decades, interest in music, particularly in singing, as a student activity has considerably increased. Between 1914 and 1928 the Intercollegiate Glee Club Association increased its membership from four clubs to ninety. These clubs have proven, according to the testimony of Mr. Zanzig, that "credited with as much intelligence and love of excellence in the superb sport of singing as they have for generations eagerly exhibited in the usual college sports, students will sing the best choral music with great delight to themselves and to their audiences." In 1927-1928, according to a survey made by the Federal Office of Education, 3,935 out of 14,725 high schools had courses in instrumental music with a total enrollment of 132,468 boys and girls. Developments in this field were spotty, and there was little musical instruction in the rural schools serving about one-fourth of the population. Yet progress was being made and experience in wholesale musical education being gained.

Government aid to music is not uncommon in the United States, though it is certainly not extensive. In 1925 the National Bureau for the Advancement of Music found by means of a questionnaire that in 327 municipalities a total of \$1,254,481 had been appropriated for music during the preceding year, nearly \$1,000,000 of which was for band music. Twenty-two states then had laws specifically authorizing such appropriations. Detroit has been

paying, at least in normal years, \$30,000 a year to provide free concerts every evening during the summer in the Belle Isle Park. Baltimore appropriated almost the same sum in 1929, though a small fee was charged for admission. Cleveland also gives its orchestra municipal support. San Francisco has carried a deficit of about \$8,000 for a series of popular concerts, and, in 1930, paid about \$30,000 more for two series of popular priced symphony concerts, one in summer and one in winter. In Westchester County, New York, the County Recreation Commission has made music an important part of its activities, which are supported by tax money, supplemented by fees, gifts and rentals. A chorus of 1,500 singers took part in its first annual music festival at the County Center in 1930. This was a feature of a community program in which dancing, painting, science and arts and crafts also had a part.

Several foundations, including the Juilliard, the Carnegie Corporation and the Eastman Foundation, contribute toward community music. The National Federation of Music Clubs had, in 1931, a membership of 4,762 clubs, with about 400,000 individual members. It has, as Mr. Zanzig says, "taken under its care the promotion of every kind of musical endeavor, for people of all ages, professional and amateur, in all sorts of places, and composition and music appreciation as well as performance." Many of the 14,500 clubs included in the General Federation of Women's Clubs, "sponsor choruses or orchestras or both, of their own members, and many of them have given support to musical endeavors outside of their own membership." The Rotary, Kiwanis, Lions and other similar clubs usually have general singing at their meetings, some of it good; and these organizations, as well as some of the fraternal orders, often contribute to musical activities outside their own membership.

There is, of course, a close connection between community music and music as taught in the schools. School music teachers often take part also in the community organization of music, and high school graduates are found in community bands, orchestras and choruses. This is one way of bridging the gap between school and adult life, and of making the musical interest acquired in the school a continuing one. The encouragement of family groups of singers and players is another.



Another opportunity for group music is found in churches and in religious organizations of all kinds, and in this field recent years have witnessed a revival of interest. Choir schools have increased in number and improved in quality, the American Guild of Organists and the National Association of Organists have endeavored to promote higher standards, and some churches have installed "ministers of music." Music in settlement houses is a field not as widely developed as it might be in the United States, yet with some ambitious beginnings. The first settlement music school was that founded at Hull House, Chicago, in 1892, and there are now thirty-five or more such schools in the United States. Playgrounds and summer camps have proved excellent opportunities for singing, and even for instrumental music, and mention has already been made of the museum concerts, such as those given in New York and Cleveland.

Mr. Zanzig views this and much other evidence which he discovered in the course of a two years countrywide inquiry as indicative of a high order of musical activity in the United States in years to come. "Especially significant," he declares, "is the fact that the large increase in the amount of high grade music being heard over the radio has come about through the ordinary processes of democracy; that is, through growing popular interest in such music, opportunities for education with regard to it, and through the choices of independent concerns sponsoring the broadcasts, not through government domination. The remarkable progress from the din of low grade music that was received almost everywhere with apparently unchangeable complacency in the beginning of the radio's popularity gives new assurance of the innate capacity of almost all people to grow in responsiveness to what is excellent and inspiring in music. Still more important is the assurance given by the schools of potential capacities for musical skill of greater or lesser degree existing almost universally among the people." Mr. Mason is somewhat less optimistic: "To some moods," he admits, "there seems little or no hope for American music. The obstacles seem too great: the indifference of our masses, the strangle-hold of European standards and conventions on the more intelligent minority, the difficulties of all kinds, economic, psychological, technical, emotional and spiritual, that beset our composers . . . In other moods we see that our music

is already incomparably more vigorously alive than it was ten years ago—and we dare to hope.”

The difference between those who are hopeful about American music and those who are not seems to lie in the angle of vision; if its present state is compared with the state of music in Germany or Italy the outlook is less satisfactory than if it is compared with conditions in this country a generation or more ago. The struggle for a deep-seated, widespread musical culture is likely to be a long one. On the other hand, some progress has clearly been made.

Perhaps the critic who finds the great mass of Americans still musically illiterate and is impatient of their slow development in musical culture may derive some consolation from the fact that in this field as in more prosaic ones America's inventive genius has been at work. Already, within the past decade, we have seen the phonograph expand from a “defective contrivance, capable of reproducing less than three octaves of the musical scale, and even within this range introducing unpleasant distortions,” to one “capable of reproducing a compass of six or seven octaves and minimizing distortion.”<sup>78</sup> New metal alloys seem likely to be found to take the place of the unsatisfactory reed in the clarinet. Electricity may be used not only to amplify musical tones but actually to produce them. E. W. Kellogg has ventured the opinion that “a magnetic pick-up attached to a violin bridge, for example, would probably give us a violin with a different but pleasing voice quality, while preserving all the power of expression which the violin now possesses.” Acoustics, according to Mr. Carl Dreher, has been reduced to “an engineering entity as definite as the building of an electric refrigerator.” This may be considered as a line of aesthetic progress, since the finest symphony, played by the finest orchestra, may be ruined by bad acoustics.

While Americans were spending \$10,000,000 in the single and not too prosperous season of 1930–1931 for concerts, and more than 200 communities were holding civic and community concerts on a subscription basis, the related art of dancing was also showing notable growth; though here, too, it is the rate of growth rather than the total of achievement that is striking. “The post-war period,” according to Mr. Paul R. Milton, editor of *The Dance*

<sup>78</sup> See the brief but interesting discussion of this subject in the article, from which these quotations are taken, by Carl Dreher, in the *American Mercury*, January, 1932.

*Magazine*,<sup>79</sup> "is notable for the vastly greater professional and amateur interest; for the shift in popularity from ball-room dancing to creative dancing; for greater originality in stage dancing; and for the rise of movements which show a tendency to duplicate in the dance what the Little Theatres have done in the drama. Twelve years ago there were a few creative dancers, such as Pavlova, Isadora Duncan, Ruth St. Denis, Ted Shawn and so on. Their inspiration led to the present wide interest, as shown by the facts that there are 1,000 professional creative dancers at present, 250 teachers of creative dancing, 3,000 students, and that the number of dance concerts in New York and Chicago rose from 30 four years ago to more than 100 now each season. This represents an entirely new and a still growing phase in American dancing."

In 1920 it was estimated that there were in the United States 200,000 students of the dance and 2,500 teachers; in 1931 there were said to be 500,000 students and 5,000 teachers. More than a million others were estimated in 1931 to be studying, more or less seriously, ball-room dancing—which, of course, is often far from being an art. The number of stage dancers increased from 30,000 in 1920 to about 40,000 in 1931. In 1931 there were many woman teachers of this art, and among its 25,000 students there were large numbers of women and girls. Thousands of children who in 1920 would at most have learned only ball-room dancing are now being taught interpretative dancing, tap dancing and acrobatics. A dance repertory theatre in New York City made money during its third one-week season, in 1931—a notable achievement for an enterprise of that sort at that time. "Dance centers" have been established within the past year or two, three in New York City and one in Chicago, with the definite idea of making them the "Little Theatre" of the dance. In 1920 there were no American magazines devoted to the dance; now there are three, with circulations, at last reports, of 25,000, 5,000 and 800 respectively.

To quote Mr. Milton again: "Ball-room dancing excepted, all dancing has improved immensely in skill and originality and creative fervor. The mood is for naturalistic dances, in which the

<sup>79</sup> The material in quotation and other material which follows was very kindly furnished by Mr. Milton for the purposes of the present study.

German influence is at present very strong . . . There is a trend away from traditional ballet and toward individuality of expression. The public is inclined to support 'big names,' but a more generous general support of dancing is noticeable."

A French critic, André Levinson,<sup>80</sup> has a less flattering opinion of our "originality." "As practiced in the United States," says M. Levinson, "the concert dance, in search of a national formula, pays homage to an amateurism that is sometimes judicious and often ingenuous. Travelling all over the world and rummaging in the museums, it builds up its synthetic forms with a boundless eclecticism, dabbling in every style and decking itself out in all sorts of gew-gaws. This passion for 'stylization' denotes the absence of a style; for lack of a historical basis the dancers over there delight themselves in aesthetic odds and ends, a sampling of various manners." It may be true that in the field of the dance we now stand about where we did in painting or architecture a generation ago. Eclecticism is bound to characterize a relatively unfamiliar art in a pioneer country. America's only strictly native dances are those of the Indian; its only spontaneous dances those brought to this country by various immigrant groups, from the days of the Pilgrims down. Among these the Negro dances, arising as they do from a racial talent for music and rhythm, stand out, though the "barn dance" and various other rural dances have a long and interesting history behind them.

The revival of the dance shows itself both in concert performances and in the folk dance. During the season of 1930-1931, according to a compilation published in the *New York Times*, there were 115 dance recitals on "Broadway," 137 dance recitals in New York City but not in the theatre district, and 85 studio presentations of dances. The old prejudice against the male aesthetic dancer seems to be weakening, though it cannot be said to have died out. Folk dance societies are active in most of our cities and English folk dancers are well received here. Whether traditional folk dances, which were developed among populations whose ways of living were almost entirely different from those of an industrialized twentieth century country, can have real significance in America remains to be seen. Belief that they may be is strengthened in the activities of the American Folk Dance Society, reor-

<sup>80</sup> Quoted in the *New York Times*, June 7, 1931.

ganized in 1929 as the United States Section of the International Commission on Folk Arts. Miss Elizabeth Burchenal, president of this organization, has been a pioneer in the field.

Pageantry has in it something of the dance, something of the drama, and something of music. In essence it is as old as civilization, in the form in which it has appeared in the United States it is a thing of yesterday. Revived in England in 1905, it was imported into America, and, as Kenneth Macgowan states,<sup>81</sup> "had spread so rapidly that by 1913 at least 46 pageants, festivals and masques had been produced in 15 American states." Its prophet in this country was Percy Mackaye. Mackaye's "The Pageant and Masque of St. Louis," in which he collaborated with Thomas Wood Stevens, employed 7,500 actors and drew as many as 150,000 spectators in a single night. George Pierce Baker's "The Pilgrim Spirit," written for the Massachusetts Tercentenary, is a comparatively recent example. Frederick H. Koch produced the "Pageant of the Northwest" at the University of North Dakota in 1914, and he and his students stimulated the production of other pageants throughout that region. Later he carried the same idea, together with his "Little Country Theatre," to the University of North Carolina. The bi-centenary year of the birth of George Washington, 1932, witnessed an extensive employment of pageantry all over the country, produced with the assistance and cooperation of a national commission created by act of Congress.

On the whole, however, pageantry has not fulfilled the high expectations that were entertained for it twenty or twenty-five years ago. Probably it cannot be a permanent dramatic form in the United States, but must depend upon those somewhat rare occasions on which patriotic fervor or community spirit is aroused by a significant contemporary event or an important anniversary.

It is probably true that nearly all the activities mentioned in this chapter have been financially hampered as a result of the economic depression which began in 1929—how seriously must be left for some future study to determine. Enough of them have been continued, often at a considerable sacrifice, to support the conviction that they are the expression of something more than a superfluity of time and leisure resulting from prosperity.

<sup>81</sup> In *Footlights across America*, New York, 1929.

## CHAPTER XIII

### THEATRE AND CINEMA

THE post-war period has seen great changes in the dramatic arts in the United States. The decline in the number of "road companies" and in the extent of their travels; the increasing concentration of theatrical enterprises in New York City; the rise of the Little Theatre and kindred organizations; and the technological and perhaps artistic advances made by the motion picture from its crude beginning are outstanding events.

Kenneth Macgowan has summed up the history of the American theatre as follows:<sup>82</sup> "First came the local acting companies imported direct from Europe to coastal cities like Philadelphia, New York and Boston. Then American stock companies, created in these cities and in towns farther west. Next 'stars' who outgrew local companies and traveled from one to another supported by the local players. After that a slow decay of the stock companies while the travelling stars brought two or more players with them. Soon the stars were taking complete troupes on tour and appearing in their own repertories over what was practically a circuit of river and railroad cities. As New York grew larger and more powerful Broadway stars and even Broadway plays *sans* stars found it profitable to tour the country. By the 'nineties the old stock companies were no more as serious artistic undertakings, and—with the advent of the booking syndicate in 1896—the long run system of Broadway and the touring system of the Road became the fixed economic form of the American theatre. It is as characteristic of America as mass production and the skyscraper, but it may not prove so enduring."

The commercial theatre, like almost every other commercial enterprise, began to feel the pinch of depression acutely at the end of 1929; at the end of July, 1932, only six "legitimate" theatres were open on Broadway—three of which were plays, two of which were new musical comedies and one of which was a musical comedy

<sup>82</sup> In *Footlights across America*, *op. cit.*

revival, kept alive by extensive salary cuts and other drastic economies. Even before this low ebb, however, the theatre had entered upon a period of declining profits. Costs of production and losses when plays failed increased by two or three hundred percent or more. Salaries at least doubled, and with the arrival of the talking films Hollywood's fabulous salary scale gave it the pick of Broadway stars. Prices of admission were greatly increased, at least up to 1929, and ticket speculators, bargaining with theatre managers to assume some of the risks, added as much as they dared to the nominal price to the purchaser. At the same time "cut-rate" agencies did what they could to prop up weak plays by offering tickets at bargain prices. Ticket-buying became almost as much of a game of wits as play-producing itself. These tendencies went so far that it was difficult to correct them when the general price level began to fall, the amount of money which the average citizen could afford to spend on the theatre abruptly diminished and the theatre public was drastically reduced.

These facts would be of slight importance if they merely affected the pocket-books of producers, theatre owners and New York City theatre-goers. Their effect, however, was to diminish the amount of experimentation in the New York theatre. When less than one play out of three earned even its expenses, as was estimated to have been the case on Broadway during the prosperous season of 1927-1928, the "art" element was subordinated in the frantic search for the "sure-fire hit." At the same time the sale of motion picture rights of plays became so profitable that productions were often put on merely as a preliminary step to such a sale, and the standards of the motion picture to some extent invaded the legitimate theatre. There was, and perhaps still is, danger of the legitimate drama becoming parasitical upon the film industry. One factor, however, worked against this outcome. This was that the dramatic standards of New York City, either in the legitimate drama or in motion pictures, are not entirely those of the rest of the country. Plays which succeed in New York are not always popular in Boston, Philadelphia and Chicago, and motion pictures which have a big-city appeal are often less successful in the smaller communities.

Critics generally agree—though the point can hardly be sustained by objective evidence—that the best American produc-

tions nowadays represent marked improvement in play-writing, stage design, stage illumination and acting over those of even a decade ago. Whether the worst plays of today are worse than those of ten or twenty years ago is a question within which there is room for wide difference of opinion. Technically, today's worst play has advantages not possible a few years ago. It can also go farther in the direction of vulgarity and indecency than either public taste or law would have permitted prior to the World War. In the hands of genius the present freedom of vocabulary and situation may stimulate creativeness; in the hands of panderers it may drag the theatre into the gutter. An examination of lists of plays produced in New York City during recent years, however, encourages the belief that the gutter elements in the modern drama are not the most profitable ones. Eugene O'Neill stands near the forefront of a group of new playwrights who are making significant use of modern American themes; and O'Neill and several others of this group, whether or not they seek an outlet through the purely commercial theatre, have had commercial successes.

Stage design has changed from the realism of a Belasco production to the symbolism which is a favorite approach of Robert Edmond Jones; whether this is progress or not is beside the question. Radical changes in this field may be imminent; in the two closely related specialties of light and color interesting experiments have already been made. The actor himself has gained a degree of economic security by means of his own trade union, though he has suffered heavily by the perhaps temporary decline in the number of productions. The style of acting has changed within the past decade. "The molded, bombastic, conventionalized quality," says Mr. Alfred Lunt,<sup>83</sup> "is slowly going, and its gradual extinction is, I feel, brought about by a too prodigal display of it in cheap movies and equally cheap stage productions. The reaction against excessive flamboyancy can be coupled with the demands made by modern playwrights for a more truthful and understanding interpretation of their work. Since the actor is a much shrewder man than is suspected, he readily recognizes the trend and falls into line. In divesting his work of staginess he becomes *naturalistic* because that is the style of acting now in demand."

<sup>83</sup> In *Revolt in the Arts*, by Oliver M. Sayler and others, *op. cit.*



When its standards are changing an art is likely to be prolific. Unless we accept the gloomy view that the legitimate drama's present symptoms are in reality its death throes we may reasonably look forward to an experimental and creative period. If this development takes place the commercial metropolitan theatres cannot help playing a large part. But more important in a discussion of American culture is the part played by the community theatres and little theatres, and by theatres everywhere, under whatever name, in which the turning of a profit is the secondary object and the production of what are thought to be good plays, or the education of the public in the appreciation of the dramatic arts, is the primary object. Many ideas which have been taken up by the commercial theatre have had their origins in the non-commercial or semi-commercial theatre, which thus becomes important not only to its own clientele but to the stage at large. Perhaps in the latter classification we should place the summer stock companies of which there was a notable flowering in 1932. The backers of these companies are not as a rule averse to making profits. Nevertheless they often bring to the summer resorts and suburban centers in which they usually play a repertoire of modern drama which has stood the test of Broadway production and new or experimental plays which might otherwise not reach an audience.

It is difficult to find a satisfactory name for the non-commercial theatre. Even the term "non-commercial" is misleading, for most of such theatres charge admission prices and the successful ones often afford a livelihood to actors and managers and perhaps some return to backers or stockholders. "Little Theatres" are not always little. "Community theatres" may recruit their talent from their communities or they may be largely professional. Stock companies receiving some municipal support may become "civic" theatres, or they may take that name without receiving the support. The distinction between a stock company and a repertory theatre is clear enough to the managers of repertory theatres but not always to the general public. But most of the theatres which are called "Little," "Civic," "Community" or "Repertory" represent either a revolt against the frankly commercial theatre, or an attempt to fill the gap caused by the decline in the number of commercial road plays.

The New York Theatre Guild really began its career as the Washington Square Players, attempting to produce for small and selected audiences plays that Broadway would not or could not put on. It has grown into an organization which in normal times has an ample income for large scale productions on Broadway and for seasons in several out of town theatres. Because of its subscription plan it can produce anything it chooses, though a prolonged series of unpopular choices would probably destroy its sources of revenue. A large number of its plays could doubtless have been produced profitably by commercial managers, and its direction, acting and stage design are entirely professional. Its strength lies in its self-selected clientele. But it is just as much compelled to please that clientele, if it is to remain solvent, as any commercial producer. The larger and more elaborate such an enterprise becomes the more attention it must pay to commercial considerations. One main test of a people's aesthetic appreciation, however, is its willingness to spend money, or its equivalent, on the arts; and the adjective "commercial" in this connection is not necessarily a term of reproach.

Two other types of "non-commercial" theatres such as have flourished in New York City and elsewhere are represented by the Neighborhood Playhouse, which began as an adjunct of the Henry Street Settlement, and which finally acquired a theatre of its own and either trained or hired what amounted to a professional staff; and by the Civic Repertory Theatre of Miss Eva Le Gallienne. The repertory theatre, as Miss Le Gallienne conceived it, was to "become eventually a library of plays—but plays alive, not growing dusty on their shelves." Several seasons of this theatre have already shown the possibility of a popular and perhaps a financial success.

But enterprises of this sort in the larger cities are necessarily in competition with "Broadway" plays. Their general standards may be higher than those of Broadway, but Broadway sometimes meets them on their own level with such plays, as "What Price Glory," "The Green Pastures" or "StreetScene." The most interesting tests of a community's attitude toward the dramatic arts come in instances when the community must either produce its own drama or go without. Sometimes the existence of a good stock company may be just as significant of a hunger for plays. Figures published

by *Equity*, the magazine of the actors' union, indicate that the number of stock companies in the United States increased from 133 in the season of 1923-1924 to 257 in the season of 1926-1927. Some of the companies are operated as parts of chains, and in some cases the star players migrate from one community to another until they have made the round of the whole chain.

Most American communities, of whatever size or degree of sophistication, have long been familiar with the occasional amateur play production; many have had private clubs, often socially exclusive, which produced plays for the delectation of their own membership. When the exclusiveness is dropped, players recruited from among all who happen to be both interested and gifted, and the entire public invited to buy tickets the community theatre comes into being. But, as Mr. Macgowan, who has already been quoted, points out, the amateur theatre rarely remains amateur.

"Community theatres usually begin," he states, "like the Dallas venture, by giving their plays in any halls they can get hold of. Some start in back parlors, some in high school auditoriums, some in disused barns. If they prosper a little or some one with means becomes interested, they hire a better stage or build one in some rented structure . . . The budget runs from \$1,000 to \$2,500 a year . . . and there are no paid employees. But then there are usually no more than four or five productions a year, and seldom more than two performances of each bill—usually one. But more performances bring in more money at no more outlay. So the next step is a hired director . . . The next step in the attempt to please still further the growing audience and keep down the profits is building a theatre. And this usually calls for at least one more paid employee, a janitor . . . More paid employees follow as the membership increases . . . A technical assistant or art director is usually the third employee, though sometimes it is a business manager."

In the larger communities the professional actor soon follows, though his work may be supplemented by that of the gifted and experienced amateur. Sometimes the amateur develops into a professional and becomes one of a paid permanent company. Some such evolution as this occurred in the Cleveland Play House, which had its origin in an amateur organization, and which in 1929 occupied a \$300,000 theatre, had a permanent company of

eleven men and three women, and was giving about 300 performances a year in its main auditorium and 200 in a smaller one used for more esoteric and experimental productions. The Pasadena Community Playhouse, though it had in 1929 some 1,400 amateurs who could be called on for acting, and though it paid no salaries directly for acting, had a total of 40 employees, some of whom appeared in productions, and a budget of over \$145,000 a year.

Illustrations of this kind are perhaps misleading at the present time, since the depression whose effects we have had to bear in mind throughout the present discussion has not left community theatre budgets unmolested. But the general trend is evident enough. Community theatres become professionalized to about the degree that their respective communities can afford to pay for professionalism. Such theatres remain as an outlet for local talent which can meet professional standards, but they shut out the average man and woman. They cannot offer the opportunities for doing something that amateur art classes, amateur bands or amateur orchestras do. Community pride is not sufficient to make theatre patrons pay admission fees indefinitely for the sake of watching their friends and neighbors pretend to be actors. The community theatre must be thought of as we think of the community library or the community museum—as a place where its particular art is produced and exhibited as adequately as the means at hand will allow. The play is an acted book, a living picture. The audience has a cultural, not a creative experience. But this is so much better than no theatre or shoddy theatre that few feel disgruntled. There are other outlets for creative talents.

The process of making an actor, a director or a stage designer is simpler if it is started in youth. High school, grammar school and even elementary school plays are not new in the United States, but “the serious business of teaching boys and girls to produce plays” is, as Mr. Macgowan says (writing in 1929) “a product of the past six or seven years.” Mr. Macgowan continues:<sup>84</sup> “A third of the 22,000 high schools of America are probably studying and applying production methods to a rather decent grade of play. These 7,000 have definite courses with an average of 50 students to a course. Some hundreds of thousands of young actors, stage designers, stage hands and managers are producing plays for an

<sup>84</sup> In *Footlights across America*, *op. cit.*

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audience that runs into the millions. They have every sort of stage to work on, from auditorium platforms to plants so well equipped that the Theatre Guild's Repertory Company plays there in preference to local halls or opera houses. In many places the students practice playwriting and scene design as well as acting and indulge in statewide tournaments. All this is the conscious and reasoned product of a belief on the part of educators that the study of the active theatre is an invaluable factor in the educational process, that it develops personal and social qualities of the utmost value."

Out of 927 high schools to which Miss Dina Rees, whose findings are quoted by Mr. Macgowan, sent questionnaires for her *Preliminary Study of Play Production in Secondary Schools*, 296 offered courses in the drama, 567 had dramatic clubs, 202 gave occasional plays and only twelve reported no dramatic work at all. Students taking high school dramatic courses are certainly preparing to attend plays discriminately, whether on Broadway or in their own home towns; they may take their places in the community theatres, or they may go on to courses in the drama in college or university. Miss Lucile Calvert, who made a survey of dramatic courses in the institutions of higher learning several years ago, found that 131 out of 185 such institutions replying to a questionnaire were giving courses in the drama, that 45 out of the 131 were giving more than 340 classroom hours a year to them, and that about one-fourth were encouraging the writing and staging of plays dealing with native American life. A number of colleges and universities which are very active in the drama were not on her list. Mr. Macgowan gives the following table for some leading institutions.

TABLE 19.—DRAMATIC PRODUCTIONS AND PERFORMANCES AT SIX LEADING UNIVERSITIES

Institution	Number of productions each year	Number of performances each year	Institution	Number of productions each year	Number of performances each year
Carnegie Tech.....	20	128	Iowa.....	14	40 to 50.
Cornell.....	20	40 to 50	Yale.....	13	34
Northwestern.....	14	68	North Carolina.....	6	130

The figures vary with the years, but each of the institutions mentioned in the foregoing table remains active. Professor George

Pierce Baker, first at Harvard, then at Yale, has been a leader in this department of education, and his graduates have not only made Broadway successes in a few instances but in many more cases have been influential as teachers of the drama and as actors and directors in all kinds of non-commercial theatres. Professor Frederick H. Koch, already mentioned as a producer of pageants, not only inspired enthusiasm for the drama in students at the University of North Dakota and later at the University of North Carolina, but carried his plays all over the countryside. Professor Alfred G. Arvold of the North Dakota Agricultural College at Fargo has been another pioneer in this field, with a special interest in stimulating dramatic activities in the rural communities. Other universities have adopted his plan of sending out package libraries of plays, with instructions for using them.

Such a bird's eye view of the non-commercial drama as we have been able to take indicates that the drama is one of the most acceptable of the arts to the typical American community—or rather, to many types of American communities. Perhaps this is because, though it admits of all degrees of sophistication, it is one of the most primitive. The average person, once his diffidence is overcome, seems to like to act and, next to that, to see acting. The art of acting, unlike that of painting, has not had to struggle under the damning charge of effeminacy, and it has pretty well overcome the not so damning charge of not being quite respectable. It is easy to enlist community cooperation for it, and the rivalries which have arisen in connection with the little theatre tournaments, culminating in the National Little Theatre Tournament held in New York City, are of the keenest sort. These tournaments do not stir up as much popular excitement as attends a football match or even a closely contested basketball game; yet a Dallas newspaper had 400 telephone calls on a single night from readers anxious to know if the Dallas Little Theatre company had won the “meet” at Houston.

If the increase in educational time devoted to dramatics, and the growth and development of community and non-commercial theatres mean anything we must consider the drama as of mounting importance in the national culture; and we are justified in expecting not only new audiences but new playwrights, new producers and

new actors that could not have appeared under a strictly commercial regime.

But to speak of drama in America without giving some consideration to the motion picture would be like producing "Hamlet" with the title role omitted. Many millions of Americans still manage to avoid the legitimate theatre; not many stay away from the "movies," even at a time when the motion picture business is considered to be in the doldrums. Within the lifetime of a generation this form of amusement has grown from practically nothing to gigantic proportions, and to an influence that is literally incalculable. More striking yet, the motion picture industry, after attaining to full stature financially if not artistically, has been almost completely revolutionized by the appearance of the practicable talking film about 1926. Its history is therefore the history of a popular art which developed to enormous proportions under its original technique, then abruptly changed this technique for another without losing its public. It is perhaps too early to appraise even the potential aesthetic values of the talking motion picture. It cannot, however, be neglected in any cultural assay of contemporary American life. The cultural standards of the cinema, such as they are, profoundly influence, and to an unknown extent reflect, the cultural standards of the American people.

Briefly, the motion picture is a device for projecting on a screen a series of photographs of moving persons or objects, taken and exhibited at the rate of sixteen a second, and giving an illusion of continuous motion. To this device, simple in principle if not in execution, the "talkies" have added synchronized speech, sound and music. The silent films seem first to have been exhibited in this country in 1895, if the peepshow "movies" which preceded them are not taken into consideration. But it was not until about 1903 that screen "plays" appeared, and not until some years after that that they began to be common and to be taken seriously. A steady improvement in camera lenses, projecting machines and arrangements of the motion picture theatres themselves had to go on for some time before any one ventured to hint that the new amusement industry might also be an art—even an art in its infancy.

Mr. Benjamin Hampton has vividly described the status of motion pictures about 1909:<sup>35</sup> "Ten million—maybe twenty mil-

<sup>35</sup> Benjamin Hampton, *A History of the Movies*, New York, 1931. Mr. Hampton, who has since died, was himself a participant in some of the events he describes. Another

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lion; no one knew how many—new entertainment buyers had suddenly appeared in all parts of America, and were pouring their nickels into the ticket-windows. The small coins of the masses had created, within a decade, a business larger in volume than that of all spoken-drama theatres, dime museums, variety houses, lecture bureaus, concert halls, circuses and street carnivals combined. Experienced purveyors of entertainment and amusement were dazed. There were no precedents by which such an extensive public movement could be appraised . . . If any one during the first decade of motion pictures made an analysis of the entertainment hunger of the great public and concluded that the movies had come to stay he failed to leave a record of his observation.”

Under the stimulation of popular demand motion picture dramas began to be longer and more complex, the stage veterans who had played in them at first were replaced by young actors and actresses who could adapt themselves to the film technique, such as it was, and the bare halls in which films had first been shown were replaced by “palaces” of increasing and at times appalling magnificence.

Official statistics on the early growth of the motion picture industry are scarce or unreliable. If we take the item of cameras and projectors, as reported by the Bureau of the Census, we arrive at the results shown in Table 20 for seven years of the post-war period. Some allowance should be made for motion picture cameras privately used.

TABLE 20.—ANNUAL VALUE OF MANUFACTURES, MOTION PICTURE CAMERAS AND PROJECTORS, FOR SPECIFIED YEARS

1921.....	\$2,869,000
1923.....	\$2,631,000
1925.....	\$4,620,000
1927.....	\$8,345,000
1929.....	\$8,755,000

Between 1925 and 1927, according to census reports, the value of motion picture films produced in this country increased from \$93,636,000 to \$134,343,000. The value of theatrical scenery and stage equipment manufactured rose from \$327,000 in 1914 to \$3,578,000 in 1925 and \$5,743,000 in 1927, and a considerable portion of this increase must be credited to motion picture theatres.

excellent source for the history of the motion picture down to 1926 is Terry Ramsaye's *A Million and One Nights*, New York, 1926.



In 1927 motion picture producers reported a corporate gross income of \$191,385,000 and motion picture theatres a gross income of \$255,798,000. These figures probably represent most inadequately what happened in the motion picture industry after the World War. Motion picture theatres increased both in number and in size; salaries paid to actors and payments made to authors for "rights" mounted; and admission prices to theatres were raised considerably. Los Angeles became the center for motion picture production, and "Hollywood" came to signify not only a form of entertainment but a kind of heaven for the young, beautiful and talented.

By 1926, according to Mr. Hampton, "Wall Street bankers calculated the investment in studios, theatres, exchanges and merchandise at \$1,500,000,000; 'Variety' made a careful compilation of figures that placed the total at more than \$2,000,000,000; 20,000 theatres claimed an attendance of 100,000,000 a week, and the annual commerce of the American industry was placed at \$1,000,000,000 to \$1,250,000,000. The movies had grown from nothing in 1896 to a position among the half-dozen largest industries in the United States in 1926."

In *Middletown*, from which we have already quoted extensively, the Lynds have shown some interesting contrasts between the dramatic offerings available in the 'nineties and those which could be had in the same city in the 'twenties of the present century. During the entire year of 1890 less than 120 regular stage performances were on view in "Middletown"; in 1923 the motion picture theatres alone were offering "22 different programs with a total of over 300 performances . . . every week in the year." These were attended in July by two and three-fourths times the city's population, and in December by four and a half times the population.

"The program of the five cheaper houses," wrote the Lynds, "is usually a 'Wild West' feature and a comedy; of the four better houses, one feature film, usually a 'society' film but frequently Wild West or comedy, one short comedy, or if the feature is a comedy an educational film . . . and a news film. In general, people do not go to the movies to be instructed; the Yale Press series of historical films . . . were a flat failure, and the local exhibitor discontinued them after the second picture. As in the

case of the books it reads, comedy, heart interest and adventure compose the great bulk of what Middletown enjoys in the movies . . . Over against these spectacles which Middletown watches today stand the pale 'sensations' of the 'nineties, when *Sappho* was the apogee of daring at the Opera House."

This, it should be noted, is a description of conditions prior to the arrival of the "talkies" and during a period of relative prosperity. The observations were limited to one city, though that city, as the Lynds believed, had "many features common to a wide group of communities." The reaction to the motion pictures may perhaps be accepted as typical. Middle aged persons who were "brought up" in small towns can easily remember when the only available drama was that of the "ten-twenty-thirty" presented in the "Opera House" or Town Hall, an occasional Uncle Tom's Cabin show or small circus, or plays given by poorly trained and poorly directed "local talent." The motion picture has revolutionized entertainment in such communities as well as in larger ones.

The "talkies," appearing in large numbers in 1926 and thereafter, revolutionized the motion picture as the motion picture had revolutionized dramatic entertainment for the masses. It will be generally agreed that the mechanism of the "talkie" has been greatly improved since 1926, just as it will also be agreed that the photography of the motion picture has made great strides, technically, during the past ten or twenty years. One has only to see the "stills" of pictures of 1920 or 1910 to concede the latter point, or to hear again the "talkies" of 1926 to concede the former.

But the change—it is hardly possible to venture the word improvement in this connection—has been not only in the technique of reproduction but in the nature of "screen art" itself. The silent film was leading toward a development of pantomime to a high degree of expertness—witness the Chaplin films. Sub-titles were being suppressed as much as possible. But the sound picture was neither the old motion picture, nor was it a replica of stage drama. "Sound pictures," as Mr. Hampton wrote, "technically occupied a position perhaps midway between the silent screen and the spoken stage. Talkie enthusiasts declared that sound films had taken the most desirable elements of each form of entertainment and had merged them into a new, more desirable form." Whether more desirable or not the form was at least new. The

“talkie” is a vehicle of dramatic entertainment never before known to mankind. It is not merely a more efficient method of doing something that had been done before; it is the material—more or less raw, according to the delicacy of one’s tastes—for a new art. It permits the creation of beauty and significance, so far as its technology goes; if it does not actually create them the fault is evidently not with the instrument itself but with those who handle it, or with the system under which it is manipulated.

As yet the talking picture has behind it no traditions except those it has borrowed from the stage, from the old silent movies, or from the ancient art of pantomime. It may be expected to develop with the changing tastes of its huge public. The change in popular taste in motion pictures since 1910 or 1920 is obvious to any one who gives the matter consideration. The motion picture audience of today is audibly amused by excerpts from the screen dramas of bygone days which are sometimes introduced into contemporary programs for that very purpose. The audiences of ten or twenty years from now may be just as much amused by the motion pictures that are taken seriously today.

The little motion picture theatre, the experimental motion picture theatre, may find places for themselves in years to come, though apparently the motion picture must on the whole remain a mass art. In its merits and defects it should serve the cultural historian as a means of measuring popular standards.

## CHAPTER XIV

### GOVERNMENT AND ART

**A**T FIRST thought it might seem that a chapter on the relations between government and art in the United States would necessarily be almost as brief as the famous chapter on the snakes of Ireland. We have no national ministry of art, nor would it be easy to determine what, under our system of government and with our traditions, such a ministry could do if created. If the state does not initiate and create, as it does in Continental countries in this field, neither does it run the risk of mixing politics with aesthetics. There are no "official" standards of art in the United States, except as such standards may be suggested by the kind of art that governments in this country cause to be put in or on public buildings or set up in public places.

But no government can help touching the arts at many points, no matter how fixed their general policy of hands off may be. There have been few artistic activities described in this book in which national, state or federal governments did not appear as direct or indirect agents. Governmental bodies erect buildings, plan parks and even whole cities, build or contribute to the support of museums and libraries, erect statues and memorials, and touch art more and more in the field of education. Indeed, there is little teaching of art in this country that is not supported in part out of taxation or aided indirectly by exemptions from taxation. The national government, with its control over tariffs and copyright, can and does influence the economic status of the artist. The growing importance of industrial design has led to an insistent demand for the protection of property rights in such design; such protection is perhaps as important for designers in a machine age as are copyright laws for literature.

It is an ancient habit of kings to house themselves and their servants and functionaries with an eye to preserving their dignity in the presence of their subjects. Republics, including our own, have sought in similar fashion to express their ideals in archi-

ture and interior decoration. Our national capital, streets as well as buildings, was laid out under governmental supervision, though as it grew it broke away from many features of the original plan. In recent years progress has been made in beautifying the city along lines recommended by a commission consisting of Daniel H. Burnham, C. F. McKim, Augustus Saint-Gaudens and F. L. Olmsted, Jr., appointed in 1901. The Lincoln Memorial, the Arlington Memorial Bridge, and the improvement of the Mall are outstanding examples of national architecture and city planning.

Of the newer public buildings of Washington it is evident that without being in any degree modernistic they reflect the changing spirit of our times. Committed to classicism by the examples of the Capitol and the White House, government architects have not had, and have not been expected to have, much leeway for experimentation. It may be said, however, that the new Washington is regaining, or utilizing more fully, the spaciousness of the original designs of Major L'Enfant, and that its public buildings are more and more combining modern conceptions of convenience and utility with the monumental traditions handed down from the past. Breadth of streets and plenitude of open spaces make the capital more nearly what a city ought to be, according to modern theories of planning, than most of our industrial and commercial metropolises. But since Washington is neither commercial nor industrial, its solution of its own peculiar problems will not be a solution for such cities as New York, Chicago or Pittsburgh.

Any discussion of governmental architecture in the United States belongs in the chapter on architecture rather than at this point. The public buildings of states and municipalities have tended, like those of the federal government, to follow classical traditions. In New York City the old and the new may be seen close together in the classically beautiful City Hall and the lofty Municipal Building, though critics do not consider the Municipal Building as good an example of the later period as the City Hall is of the earlier. The Nebraska State Capitol at Lincoln, the Buffalo Municipal Building and the Los Angeles City Hall have been mentioned as outstanding examples of modern architecture. Louisiana's rococo State House at Baton Rouge has recently been replaced by a new structure in the twentieth century pattern. The

tradition that all state houses, court houses and other dignified public buildings must have domes and pillared porticos is clearly losing ground. But domes continue to appear, as in the new West Virginia Capitol at Charleston, and there are no evidences of aesthetic Bolshevism in this field.

Governmental policies are perhaps more important as they enter into the aesthetic aspects of parks, parkways and recreational areas. Mr. J. F. Steiner<sup>86</sup> has pointed out that "popular interest in the development of parks in all our cities, large and small, is a product of the past twenty-five years." Between 1907 and 1925 the total park acreage for cities of 30,000 or more population increased from 76,566 to 188,098, or nearly three times as fast as the total urban population. In 1928 the Bureau of Labor Statistics estimated the total capital invested in municipal parks at more than a billion dollars, and the amount spent to maintain them at more than \$100,000,000 annually. Many cities have acquired park lands outside their corporate limits; according to Mr. Steiner, "at least 100 cities ranging in size from 30,000 to 300,000 population and located in all sections of the country owned in 1925 outlying parks comprizing more than 65,000 acres." Notable park systems accessible to city populations include the Cook County Forest Preserves, near Chicago, the Westchester Park system and the Palisades Interstate Park system, both near New York City, and the Los Angeles County parks.

State park systems have grown rapidly. In 1928 there were about 4,500,000 acres in such reservations—more than half, however, in the single state of New York. In the national park system there are 23 parks, with a total area of nearly 8,000,000 acres; four of these parks have been acquired since 1920. Aesthetic considerations can never be left wholly out of sight in the development of such areas; and we find that highways, camp sites and hotels and other lodging places have been carefully studied from this point of view. To the area of national parks must be added, as has been seen in an earlier chapter, the 160,000,000 acres of the national forests, which are open to the public with restrictions intended to protect them from fire and from water pollution. Recently, as Mr. Steiner says, "the Forest Service has adopted the policy of

<sup>86</sup> See his chapter in *Recent Social Trends*, above cited for authoritative data in this field. See also his monograph in this series, entitled *Americans at Play*.

setting aside so-called primitive areas in each of the forest regions so that extensive forests of the wilderness type will always be available for those who wish to enjoy camp life under natural conditions that have not been materially altered." Technically, this is the opposite of "art." Actually, there is a strong sense of the aesthetic behind it; to leave a wilderness "unimproved" is one way of creating a design.

In 1928 a committee appointed by the Secretary of the Interior, and including in its membership Harold C. Bryant, Hermon C. Bumpus, Vernon Kellogg, John C. Merriam and Frank R. Oastler, made "a study of educational problems of National Parks."<sup>87</sup> Both in their general and in their detailed observations this committee laid emphasis upon "the beauty and meaning of nature in the aesthetic and spiritual sense." "The element of beauty," they pointed out, "should be made as effective as possible. It is also important to note that in building roads and trails scenic beauty and inspirational value may be diminished greatly by making the engineering aspect of road building the dominating feature and permitting direct approaches, or wide cuts, or fills, or curves to mar the landscape."

In their final report they incorporated the following statement: "In addition to distinctly scientific factors involved in the educational program of the National Parks there are certain elements in the field of aesthetic appreciation and a further phase to which reference is commonly made as 'spiritual understanding.' These aspects of the problem have received relatively little attention through science, excepting from the side of psychology. They have, however, been a definite objective of pictorial art, and of literature devoted to interpretation of human reaction to great features of nature. In addition to a study of the objective features of parks and their relations to each other it is necessary that any plan involving assistance to the visitor include an examination of the subjective aspect, or the attitude of the visitor as an individual human being to what is presented.

"We are not concerned merely with the fact that things may be large or wide or deep or highly colored or have an interesting

<sup>87</sup> *Reports with Recommendations from the Committee on Study of Educational Problems in National Parks*, January 9, 1929, and November 27, 1929, addressed to the Secretary of the Interior. (Published for the National Park Service.)

evolutionary development. From the point of view of the visitor we are interested in their meaning to him in terms of his most fundamental thinking and their significance in relation to his everyday life. If, as is assumed, the National Park program is designed in part to help develop the thought or the life of the visitor to higher levels, it becomes necessary to examine with the greatest care the means by which one looks upon the phenomena presented. Such is, in a manner, the program for study concerned with appreciation of the features of the parks. In development of this subject we must inevitably recognize both the scientific and the aesthetic aspects of the problem."

Probably this is the first time that this point of view has been officially taken in the United States, though we find it implied in the writings of such men as John Muir and John Burroughs; and there are traces of it in the far more matter of fact Thoreau. But the cultural approach to nature, as a feature of public policy, is new. To some extent this approach is implied in any modern park system. Landscape architecture is an art almost as old as architecture itself, and in many cases the two arts are interdependent.

The planning and control of urban areas is much more difficult than the designing of rural or wilderness parks, though such parks may be a feature of a comprehensive plan for a metropolitan region. Into city planning there enter also many other factors besides the aesthetic. The "City Beautiful" as an expression of the planning ideal has been frowned upon of late, not because beautiful cities are not desired but because, even from the aesthetic standpoint, "functionalism" has come to be considered a more satisfactory principle than decoration. Planning itself has been defined by a Department of Commerce commission as "a process whereby the larger lines and directions of future public and private development will be influenced and to some extent controlled." The uses of land, the ratios between building areas and open spaces, building heights in congested districts, and adequate provision for transportation, rapid transit and street traffic are essential elements in a city plan.

According to a Department of Commerce Survey published in December, 1929, "at least 691 municipalities in the United States have recognized the value of far-sighted planning for their orderly physical development by official commissions or boards. Forty-



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one other cities have unofficial commissions." Table 21 shows, by states, the manner in which these commissions are distributed.

TABLE 21.—OFFICIAL AND UNOFFICIAL CITY PLANNING COMMISSIONS, BY STATES

State	Number of official commissions	Number of unofficial commissions	State	Number of official commissions	Number of unofficial commissions
Alabama.....	2		Nebraska.....	2	1
Arizona.....	2	1	Nevada.....	1	
Arkansas.....	2		New Hampshire.....	1	1
California.....	85	5	New Jersey.....	26	2
Colorado.....	3		New Mexico.....	1	
Connecticut.....	15		New York.....	71	7
Delaware.....	1		North Carolina.....	9	1
District of Columbia.....	1		North Dakota.....	2	
Florida.....	15	3	Ohio.....	59	1
Georgia.....	6		Oklahoma.....	11	1
Idaho.....	1		Oregon.....	6	1
Illinois.....	40	3	Pennsylvania.....	58	3
Indiana.....	25	2	Rhode Island.....	4	
Iowa.....	10		South Carolina.....	1	
Kansas.....	25	2	South Dakota.....		
Kentucky.....	4		Tennessee.....	3	
Louisiana.....	2		Texas.....	15	1
Maine.....	4		Utah.....	3	
Maryland.....	1		Vermont.....	1	
Massachusetts.....	106		Virginia.....	5	
Michigan.....	17		Washington.....	3	2
Minnesota.....	3		West Virginia.....	1	1
Mississippi.....	...	2	Wisconsin.....	27	
Missouri.....	9	1	Wyoming.....	2	
Montana.....					

City planning in America, consciously thought of as such, goes back more than a century, the most conspicuous instance being that of Washington. The early plans consisted largely in streets and open spaces laid down on maps. The revival of interest in planning during the past few years has been largely a product of conditions created by two factors—high buildings and the increased use of the automobile. High buildings have brought about or been brought about by the congestion of population in limited areas; automobiles have both aided and impeded the movements of this population. The aesthetic and practical problems of cities have been inextricably entangled. At times it has seemed that the practical problems were the only ones that could be considered, so urgent were the needs for relieving intolerable conditions. Yet the necessary practical considerations, by fixing the

frame or the envelope within which the builders had to work, have had profound aesthetic implications.

To illustrate this point we need only consider the zoning ordinances which have been enacted in all our larger cities and in many of the smaller ones. These chiefly have to do with the apportionment of the land to various uses, and, in the larger municipalities, with the height and shape of the buildings that are to be erected upon it. Both in New York and in Chicago building heights have been regulated ostensibly with the object of admitting light to streets and adjoining property, actually, in many cases, to prevent street congestion. The latter effort, it need hardly be said, has been only partially successful. But, as was noted in the chapter on architecture, the zoning ordinances have had much to do with determining the outward aspect of the modern skyscraper. Here there is a definite, though perhaps unforeseen, relation between government and possibly the most important of the arts. Zoning cannot, however, be called an instance of governmental patronage or encouragement of the arts.

We do find, nevertheless, that outstanding city planners look beyond utility toward an ultimate artistic satisfaction—or, it might be better to say, that they see no final conflict between utility and the arts. Mr. Thomas Adams, director of the seven-year survey made by the Committee on the Regional Plan of New York and Its Environs, emphasizes this point with a quotation from Dr. L. P. Jacks, Principal of Manchester College, Oxford: "Art is simply the name we give to the wisest way of doing whatever needs to be done. Do anything as wisely as it can be done, and you stand at the growing point where all the fine arts begin. There are some people who seem to think that in order to promote the fine arts you must turn your back on the common work of the world, as it goes on, for example, in a great city, and betake yourself to another sort of society where the mysteries of art can be studied without disturbance by the toil and din and turmoil of industrial civilization. I suggest another method of looking at the matter. I would suggest that we take the toil of the world as it stands, the toil of business, the toil of industry, the toil of the professions; that we find out the wisest way of doing all that—that we accept it and close with it and make the best of it; lifting it to the highest level of excellence it is capable of reaching—and I venture to say we shall

have taken the most effective steps we could toward a revival of the fine arts, not excepting the finest of them all. Art has always grown out of the common work of the world, out of the effort to clothe that work with all the excellence it can bear."

"It is because so many think of art as something above and independent of common work instead of recognizing it as inherent in all creative effort," Mr. Adams goes on to say,<sup>88</sup> "that they are pessimistic about its attainment in a city. It is thought of as an indulgence of an elect few instead of being regarded as inherent in all production and distribution. That is why the average man is depressed by the ugliness, disorder and inefficiency he sees around him in the city . . . The degree of art that enters into the common modes of work . . . is the foundation of civic art, which includes the co-ordination, or rather the organization, of all the distinctive arts, in establishing the quality of the city as a place of work. Whatever adds to or subtracts from the efficiency of this organization strengthens or weakens the forces that have made and that sustain the city."

The Regional Plan Committee devoted a great part of its time and funds to careful economic surveys and to studies of traffic, rapid transit, transportation, and recreational facilities. It was admittedly compelled, however, in order to catch popular attention, to draw up and present proposals for civic centers, public buildings and other architectural features which might be included in the future city. In making these proposals the planners faced the fact that "artistic design is so much a matter of taste that usually it is not recognized by governments or courts as a matter that can be controlled by law."<sup>89</sup> To eliminate "disorder and ugliness" it seemed necessary to prove that these defects were "injurious, or were associated with conditions that were injurious, to health, safety or money values." The "aesthetic object" had to be "achieved indirectly." As far as can be foreseen this truth is always likely to hold in a democracy. In the absence of a satisfactory definition of "good taste" it may be suggested that it is

<sup>88</sup> "The Building of the City," *Regional Plan of New York and Its Environs*, Volume Two, by Thomas Adams, assisted by Harold M. Lewis and Lawrence M. Orton, p. 80, New York, 1931.

<sup>89</sup> Santa Barbara, California, endeavored to enforce a uniform style of architecture in rebuilding operations after the great earthquake of 1925, but a mandatory ordinance to this effect had to be dropped.

fortunate that no American governmental agency is in a position to force any kind of taste upon private citizens.

The Regional Plan Committee was a private organization, relying upon persuasion to bring about the adoption of some or all of its program. The principles guiding its plan-making, however, were substantially those animating all city planners, whether employed at public expense or not. City planning is demonstrably an art; it is, moreover, one which cannot be put into effect without governmental backing, and which of late years has increasingly had such backing. It may be safely said that the appearance of our cities, though sometimes by legal subterfuge, is being more and more linked with their comfort and convenience as "affected with a public interest."

But it is also plain that some further time must elapse before the results of this development will be everywhere visible. The kind of civic art and architecture that we are to have, and the effect of the civic spirit upon all art and architecture, must be determined by an educational process. This does not mean that the public must be educated to demand a certain kind of art and architecture, or a certain kind of city plan, but that great changes in these respects do not seem likely to come until the public becomes more sensitive to aesthetic considerations. So far as governmental action has had an effect upon the looks of our cities that effect has not been nearly so much an expression of popular taste as our clothing, our magazines, our furniture, our motor cars, our radio programs and our motion pictures have been. In an aesthetic sense commerce has been more democratic than politics.

But it must not be forgotten, even though some reiteration is required to drive home the point, that the education of the public in matters touching the arts as in other subjects is largely in governmental hands. We have seen that art courses have been gaining ground in the elementary and grammar schools, to a somewhat less extent in the high schools, and in marked degree in the colleges and universities. The common schools and high schools are in overwhelming numbers supported out of tax money, as, in whole or large part, are many of the universities. The teaching of the arts in the state universities, which are public institutions, is today making more rapid gains, on the whole, than in the private colleges and universities. But private educational institutions, when

not conducted for profit, ordinarily receive indirect grants from the state in the form of remission of taxes. One state, Massachusetts, maintains a school of art at public expense. All this constitutes governmental patronage of the arts in a very real sense. So does the use of tax money to support museums.

It would not be difficult to suggest other ways, less important than those that have been mentioned, in which government touches the arts. The Bureau of Standards, for instance, has made numerous scientific and technical studies in the field of colorimetry, many of them important to painters, textile designers and others who are artists or whose work touches the arts.<sup>90</sup>

To sum up, it is evident that neither the federal government nor any state or local government in the United States has the influence in the field of the arts that is exercised by many European governments. Our governments do not interfere in such matters where interference can be avoided. But interference cannot always be avoided. In education, throughout the schools, the universities, and to some extent the museums and the libraries, government dominates. Government buildings reflect a taste, though it is not always the most advanced taste. Cities find it necessary to regulate building and to plan streets and means of transportation and communication, and in so doing call upon the art of city planning for aid. There are no indications of direct governmental patronage of the arts to be expected in America in the near future. There are many indications that the indirect influence of government upon the arts is increasing.

<sup>90</sup> Between 1906 and 1929, according to bibliographies of the Bureau of Standards, the Bureau was responsible for 41 official publications and 115 unofficial publications in this field alone.

## CHAPTER XV

### CONCLUSION

IT IS impossible to view the subject of the arts with entire detachment, no matter how much one wishes to do so. An interest in art presupposes a desire for its advancement; and that desire is likely to lead either to bitterness and pessimism, or to over-enthusiasm, according as one regards what America has not done in the arts or pays most attention to what it has done. America has had critics—sincere, no doubt, in both cases—who have asserted that no civilized person could cheerfully endure existence in the United States, and others who have declared their faith in an approaching American renaissance. Each of these contentions perhaps reveals an emotional bias. In the present discussion an attempt has been made to avoid the first extreme, of undue pessimism, and the second, that of undue optimism.

The authors have been aware, nevertheless, that the very nature of the factual material at their disposal has encouraged a seemingly optimistic bias. The reasons are patent. The criticisms of American art are mainly qualitative—that it is imitative, commercialized, vulgarized, hampered by censorships and Puritanical restrictions and inhibitions. Whether or not these criticisms are justified is largely a matter of opinion—as much a matter of opinion, indeed, as criticisms of incumbent administrations by the party in opposition. To maintain that they are not justified is merely to set one aesthetic theory against another, and this it was not the authors' purpose to attempt. All that could be objectively shown, within the necessary limits of the task, was that there were differences of opinion as to the aesthetic values in American art, and that present tendencies were interpreted in divers ways. Absolute progress could not be demonstrated. It could not even be demonstrated that there is such a thing as absolute progress in the arts.

The measurable data presented have been of two kinds: the general and the illustrative. We know, for example, that there has

been an increase in the number of persons visiting art exhibitions and art museums over a ten year period; that more high school and college students, both actually and relatively, are studying music; that more students are enrolled in art schools and art courses than was formerly the case; that the number of persons in the United States who call themselves artists has increased; that the number of little theatres and the total attendance at such theatres have grown; and that advertisers and manufacturers now employ trained artist-designers in larger numbers than they used to. These data reflect a positive growing interest in the arts, though they tell us nothing as to the motive for that interest or the discrimination shown by those who profess it.

Illustrative data should be treated with even more caution. We may know that a certain department store has given much attention to the styling of its goods, and that it has called upon persons trained in the art schools to assist it in this process. The store has met with comparative prosperity. But this prosperity may have been due in whole or part to other factors than the store's attention to aesthetic factors. We do not even know that its aesthetic judgments have been good. Perhaps it has been successful because they were bad. We may know that a certain manufacturer has put his breakfast food into a package designed by a graduate of the Yale School of Fine Arts or the Chicago Art Institute, and that there has been an immediate increase in sales. We do not know that the new design is better than the old or that other influences—perhaps an extensive advertising campaign—may not have operated. We may know that a certain community has enlisted an unusual percentage of its population in choral societies, in little theatre groups or in art classes. We do not know that another city of the same size could bring about the same results by the same expenditure of money and energy.

Moreover, we have few data as to department stores, manufacturers or communities that have attempted to introduce aesthetic principles into their activities and that have failed. Aesthetic surveys tend to strike the high spots, not the low spots. Isolated but brilliantly successful experiments in arousing aesthetic interest in a number of communities and enterprises might be accompanied by a general recession in such interest, or by its diversion to lower levels. We do think, however, that the number of such instances

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which could not have been found ten or fifteen years ago, and the fact that they are to be found in practically all the arts, has a certain presumptive significance, though we will not attempt to estimate its weight.

Certain illustrative data have been considered as important, not as demonstrating what the aesthetic interests of the American people actually are, but as suggesting what they might be. In weighing such evidence we have tried to consider both the similarities and the diversities which exist among Americans of varying educational and economic levels, and in varying social and geographical environments. It would be difficult to write an aesthetic prescription for the entire United States. Yet it may well be argued that the desire for aesthetic experience of some kind is well-nigh universal.

What progress has America made toward satisfying this desire? What progress is it now making? As we look back to the beginning of our history, and again as we follow the waves of settlement westward, we see that there have been repeated pioneer periods during which our people, or large portions of them, have had neither the facilities nor the training for aesthetic expression and appreciation. Nature alone offered them the opportunity, and nature, to the pioneer, is rarely genial. But the pioneer experience of the country has been of two kinds: the earlier, which developed first into a handicraft culture, then, by slow degrees, into an industrial; the later, which merged so quickly into the industrial stage that, in a manner of speaking, the Indian war bonnets had not disappeared from sight over the western horizon before the smoke of the locomotive was seen in the East. On the great plains this statement was not even a figure of speech.

Obviously, there is a difference between the cultural background of the New Englanders of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, who wove, embroidered, made furniture, carved wood and built houses which are still admired; and that of the nineteenth century settlers in the Mississippi Valley and beyond, whose handicraft period was abbreviated by the swift spread of manufactured goods, with a resulting scantiness of creative tradition. Or if a creative tradition existed it was of a kind which could not survive the early primitive conditions. The modes of life changed too rapidly. And the Puritan tradition,



the country over, though its influence has probably been exaggerated, operated for a long time to prevent any conscious and determined reaching out for aesthetic expression.

That the American people were, on the whole, unaesthetic rather than anti-aesthetic may be conjectured. When artistic stirrings began in the country they led inevitably, in the absence of national patterns, to importations from abroad; in most of our arts we have not yet ceased to import from abroad. The first really American paintings, for example, were American in subject matter rather than in method. First London, then Paris and Rome educated our artists. The growth away from this tutelage has naturally been slow. There is no reason to believe that it has been slower than might have been expected of any people under like circumstances. No permanent factors can be demonstrated in American life which deny us artistic parity with other nations. We are, and have been, going through a process of normal evolution.

At certain points this evolution has been more rapid than at others. This statement may certainly be made of architecture, though with special reference to the skyscraper; our homes, schools, churches and public buildings are less individualistic; and a lay visitor to a modern architectural exhibition finds it hard to determine without looking at the signatures which combination of cement, steel and glass is American and which foreign. In painting we are by no means independent of Parisian influences. Our development has, however, gone far enough to indicate that a genuinely American expression is possible. In music we have contributed some new motifs, though not yet an internationally recognized composer of the first rank. In drama we have achieved a degree of individuality and independence. In motion pictures we have set world standards, though they cannot yet be said to be high standards. In motion picture photography, as an art by itself, we have probably gone further than any other country except Germany. Indeed, it may be said that in the cinema we have displayed both our best and our worst.

In commercial and industrial design it cannot be denied that we have had an awakening, and that whatever may be the merits of our tastes as displayed in those fields we are at least aware of taste as a factor in them. Indeed, we may set this awareness down as the most significant feature of the present situation.

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Art education, direct and indirect; the appeal of advertising; higher incomes and shorter working days, as they had developed down to 1930; the need for leisure time activities—all these have led to a turning toward the aesthetic satisfactions. We cannot escape the impact of such instrumentalities as the radio and advertising—we have to look and to listen, and we cannot avoid in the long run trying to improve the quality of these experiences.

There is an aesthetic unrest, just as there is an economic and social unrest. There are unmistakable signs of a revolt against the cultural poverty which has marked American life. This is normal and to be expected. We know of no civilized people who have not at one stage or another turned toward the arts for self-expression; though we do know that that expression has sometimes been original and creative, as in the case of the Greeks, and sometimes imitative, as in the case of the Romans of the Empire. Into which category America will ultimately fall it would be foolish to try to prophesy. Our unprecedented mingling of races and cultures, the very uniqueness of the history of our continent, make predictions vain. The creation of a definitely American race has apparently only begun; we cannot be sure of anything except a biological richness and variety in the ultimate strain.

From a social point of view, as contrasted with art for art's sake, the problem of art, like that of religion and recreation, turns today on its service to man in his inner adjustment to an environment which shifts and changes with unexampled rapidity. It appears to be one of the three great forces which stand between maladjusted man and his breakdown. Each serves in its own way to bring him comfort, serenity and joy. It is conceivable, but by no means proved, that the development of these forces in American life would reduce the terrible decimations made by mental disorders.

It appears, from the inquiries, that while conscious appreciation of the fine arts is becoming more general, a much more widespread movement is to be traced in our changing standards for the appearance of the objects which should surround us in our daily lives, both as to color and design. That these changes are largely unconscious, and that they are seldom recognized as touching the field of the arts, does not detract from their significance. They are

important in our present society, and they may be laying a foundation for more widespread art appreciation in the future.

The United States today cannot be said to have an art tradition. Whether the advent of such a tradition as that of ancient Greece or of modern Japan can be foretold, and the degree to which conscious leadership can be effective in achieving it, present problems of many aspects. So far as beauty consists in the establishment of harmony between appearance and function, a rapidly changing society such as ours today would appear to be a stimulating factor. So far as beauty depends on decoration, the history of the past would indicate that artistic adjustment to a cultural pattern cannot be achieved until that pattern has been in existence sufficiently long to permit of much experimentation with the various possibilities it offers. Thus far, government has done comparatively little for art. Private wealth has been extraordinarily generous, but not always wise. The school may well grow into an effective agency for the development on a nationwide basis of an elementary consciousness of beauty, and a more general understanding of the place of art in industry and commerce may prove to have great potentialities as increasing leisure and rising standard of living make it possible for more people to exercise their choice of wider variety and a better quality of goods.

Art is deep rooted in human life; it is today as nearly always in the past a most important factor in human behavior. To peer into the future would be fascinating, but beyond these tentative suggestions, it would be futile to do so; for art itself is too many-sided, its manifestations in the past have been too varied, and it is affected by external factors too much to warrant the attempt.

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